

**The Rev. Deacon Steve L. Darby
Church**

Proper 10B Sermon 129 8th Sunday after Pentecost

Trinity Episcopal

7/15/18

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

The Reverend Martin Dale relates the following story:

A young police officer was taking his final exam for the police academy and he was set the following problem to solve. "You are on patrol in the outer city when an explosion occurs in a gas main in a nearby street. On investigation you find that a large hole has been blown in the footpath and there is an overturned van nearby. Inside the van there is a strong smell of alcohol. Both occupants—a man and a woman—are injured. You recognize the woman as the wife of your Chief of Police, who is at present away in the USA.

A passing motorist stops to offer you assistance and you realize that he is a man who is wanted for armed robbery. Suddenly a man runs out of a nearby house, shouting that his wife is expecting a baby and that the shock of the explosion has made the birth imminent.

Another man is crying for help, having been blown in the adjacent canal by the explosion, and he cannot swim.

Describe in a few words what actions you would take."

The young man thought for a moment, picked up his pen and wrote, "I would take off my uniform and mingle with the crowd."

Most people love music and we can argue which is the best genre. My taste in music runs the gamut but there are areas of music where I draw the line. Now, dancing, Regina has to drag me onto the dance floor kicking and screaming; I like the music but not necessarily moving my feet to it.

In today's readings, it would be all too easy to get lost into the music. Both David and Herodias cut a "mean" rug and it distracts us from what we really need to pay attention to. And it is not the cost of the dance but the cost of following Christ.

If life has taught us anything, we have learned that there are no "safe harbors". Schoolhouses can become battlefields as can our streets. Innocent children playing on the sidewalks or people at the neighborhood theater are no longer safe. The ordinary becomes extraordinary.

When I was in elementary school, the house we lived in was approximately two miles from San Marco shopping center and my parents would think nothing of me peddling my bike through city traffic to a movie, checking out the bookstore and peddling back home. I would no more allow my child to do what I was allowed to do in the Fifties and that is sad!

And, unfortunately, we have also learned that the interior of churches no longer offer safety from evil that may enter through the doors. In the Fourth through the Seventh century, cathedrals were a place in which those wrongly accused of a crime could ask for "sanctuary". A

sanctuary, in its original meaning, is a sacred place, such as a [shrine](#). By the use of such places as a safe haven, by extension has come to be used for any place of safety. But we have unfortunately come to realize that as in Jeremiah (8:11) we yearn for “Peace, peace” when there is no peace.”

Like the policeman in the story, it would be less painful and stressful if we could disappear in the crowd; but as Christians, we cannot duck our responsibilities to the world. As John Wesley put it: “I look on all the world as my parish”. Jesus, too, reminds us of our obligation. From Matthew, He gives the Great Commission to “go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them all things that I have commanded you”

But let’s be clear. God is not asking us to be martyrs either. If we do not take care of ourselves then we cannot take care of the hungry or the weak or the poor or the lost or those in mental or physical distress.

Esther de Waal, in *Seeking God*, talks about the Benedictine life: “Lack of interior peace threatens the whole fabric of the community and that is why St. Benedict starts here, where that lack of peace begins, inside ourselves, with the murmuring that fragments and destroys us. When there is so much concern today with the peace of the world...St. Benedict brings us back to this very simple and basic root: peace must start within myself. How can I hope to contribute to the peace of the world when I cannot resolve my own inner conflicts?” And we have a duty to ourselves and to God and to those who need us, at home or in our community to quell any conflicts that may be going on inside us before we can hope to do the same in the world.”

At hospice, when faced with a meeting or a funeral where I was feeling overwhelmed, I would turn to Charlotte, my office mate, and say: “I need fifteen minutes” and she knew what I was asking for. She would leave the office closing the door behind her. It was a time that I would attempt to clear my thoughts of everything, say a mantra directed to God and a request for help and His presence. I have to say that He always gave me what I needed....always.

It would be great if we could somehow put on a disguise and blend into the crowd. And that is an option and one that we could take. You have heard it before: “The poor are always with us”. “I am not my brother’s keeper.” “I don’t want to be bothered”. “It’s the way it always has been; why try to change things.” And on and on and on. But as Christians, we walk another road. Whether at home or in our local community or in places far away, we are called to be our brother’s keeper. But realizing that we are never alone.

From Philippians 4: 8 – 9. Finally, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

AMEN