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First Presbyterian Church, Bordentown, NJ

CHILDREN'S SERMON: THE GOOD SAMARITAN

I have another story to tell you this morning. It begins with a man who comes to Jesus and asks him what he has to do to get into heaven. Jesus tells him he has to do what the Bible says. So the man thinks for a minute and says, so ... I need to love God with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength, and with all my mind and I need to love my neighbor as myself?

Jesus looks at him and says 'you got it – you do that and you're doing good.' But ... the man really wanted to make sure he knew what to do and he wasn't quite sure who his neighbors were – I mean, are you neighbors the people next door? Or the people down the street? What about the people in the next town – did he need to love *them* as much as he loved himself? He just wanted to double check to make sure he knew who to love, so he asked Jesus, "who *are* my neighbors?" And rather than telling him, Jesus tells him a story – it goes something like this ...

There was a man walking down the road – he was going from Jerusalem (one city) to Jericho (another city) and while he was walking, a band of robbers snuck up on him and robbed him of all he had and beat him up and left him on the side of the road.

Then, along came a minister, but rather than helping the man and looking after him, the minister crossed to the other side of the street and kept walking!!

Then, along came a Levite, and a Levite was kind of like a minister too, he was really important and helped take care of the temples where people worshipped; but, rather than helping the man, he too crossed the road and kept walking!!

Finally, along came a Samaritan, now, Samaritans were people the man had grown up hating – he didn't like them and he didn't trust them; and, the Samaritans felt the same way about people like the man who had been hurt: they didn't like them and they didn't trust them.

But, rather than walking away like the other two people did, this man, the Samaritan, he stopped and he helped the man up and he walked him to the nearest place to stay and he paid for a room for him and he paid the inn keeper to look after him and he promised to come back and see the man in a few days and help him again.

When Jesus had finished telling the story, he turned to the man who had asked and said, so ... you tell me, who was the neighbor in that story; and the man said, the one who helped him, even though he wasn't someone who would normally count as a neighbor because no one liked people like him.

And do you know what Jesus said? He said go and treat *everyone*, even the people you don't like, like the Samaritan treated the man who needed help.

What do you think, good story?

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I thought for our prayer this morning we could pray part of the story using our bodies – will you try it with me? It's a reminder that comes from the very beginning of the story, so just follow what I do, ready? Love your God (arms up) with all your heart (arms crossed against chest), with all your soul (hands to just above stomach), with all your strength (arms making muscles) and with all your mind (hands to temples); and love your neighbor (arms stretched out) as yourself (arms crossed against chest). Amen.