

Bruised, beaten, and helpless! the man who had fallen among thieves lay on the roadside. He was half dead, needing rescue and healing. If help had not come soon, he would surely have perished.

A priest and a Levite walk by on the other side of the road. They ignore the plight of the helpless, dying man, thinking it was the right thing to do.

But then comes this Samaritan—a foreigner of mixed race and religion, and therefore despised by the Jews. When he sees the poor, wounded man, Luke says that he had “**compassion.**” He was moved in the gut; the same way Jesus was moved at the sight of people who were suffering.

The Samaritan wastes no time in helping the injured man, immediately binding up the man’s wounds, pouring on oil and wine. He places him on his own animal and takes him to an inn.

The Good Samaritan doesn’t stop there. He places the man into the care of the innkeeper, gives him some money for expenses, and promises to repay the innkeeper for any additional expenses upon his return. This is what you call going “above and beyond the call of duty”!

And if all of this was just a lesson in morality, to remind Christians what they should do for others, then that would not leave us much in the way of comfort, would it?

In this parable Jesus paints a beautiful portrait of your salvation. He shows you just how desperate your condition was on account of sin, and He shows the gift of healing that He had come to bring.

This man in the parable provides a picture of all the fallen sons of Adam. Wounded by sin. Beaten by the devil’s attacks. Robbed of our righteousness and our good standing with God, we, too, were “dead in the trespasses and sins.”

Like this man, we were helpless and destitute. Left to ourselves, we would have most certainly perished eternally.

Eternal death and damnation are a just reward for our sins. Who could help us? The Law? Could Moses raise us up from spiritual death to life?

The parable would seem to suggest that this is not so. The priest and the Levite represent Moses and the Law of Sinai, which do not heal but only kill.

The Law is good; its commandments are pure. But they cannot help or heal the wounded and beaten sinner.

So along comes this foreigner called Christ. He is not from these parts, you might say. He has come from heaven. And He is despised by the world.

As the prophet Isaiah foretold: **Isaiah 53:3** “He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

But this man comes anyway. The Son of God saw your wretched state and had compassion. He came and did what the Law and Moses could not do. He has bound up the wounds of sinners.

He has carried your sins and griefs and sorrows to the cross. And by His stripes, by His wounds, by His death at the hands of men, you are healed. Your sins are forgiven.

The healing medicine of Christ’s forgiveness was first applied to you in your Baptism. As you were buried and raised with Christ, your Savior began His good work of healing and restoration in you.

For like the man fallen among thieves, **1 Corinthians 6:11** says, “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

But the cancer of your sin continues to rear its ugly head. You need ongoing treatments. And this is why your loving Savior has brought you into the inn of His Church and placed you into the care of His called and ordained shepherds.

In this way, He continues to do for you what He began in your Baptism. He continues to apply the healing medicine of His forgiveness, life, and salvation to your souls. And he does this in a unique and special way in the Lord’s Supper.

In that salutary gift, the same Christ who healed every disease among men, the same Christ who bound up the brokenhearted, the same Christ by whose stripes we are healed, comes and does for us what He did for so many wounded souls in the Gospel.

We come to the Lord’s Table wounded by our sins, helpless and in need of mercy and healing.

And Jesus sees our miserable condition and has compassion on us. He comes to us weak and weary sinners and gives to us the healing medicine of His crucified and risen body and blood.

Like the Samaritan in the parable, Christ binds up our wounds and pours on us the oil and wine of His good Spirit, to comfort wounded consciences.

Hymn #620 that we just sang: Jesus Comes Today with Healing makes this clear—connecting Jesus' healing power to the gift of his body and blood: "Jesus comes today with healing, Knocking at my door, appealing, Of - f'ring pardon, grace, and peace."

For this reason, the hymn appropriately calls the Lord's Supper a "balm to heal the troubled soul."

What's more is that this healing medicine of Christ's body and blood is truly a medicine of immortality. Whoever receives this medicine, trusting in its power and benefits, truly has eternal life.

Whatever sicknesses and ailments you now endure, know that these will no longer aggravate you in the life to come. For you know that the healing that Christ has begun here will be brought to completion at the day of the resurrection.

Our Lutheran forefathers understood well the healing power of the Sacrament as well as our lifelong need for this sacred gift.

So did the Ancient Fathers of the Church, as we see in the words of St. Ambrose, who wrote: "Because I always sin, I always need to take the medicine"

These venerable Fathers in the faith understood that because the sinful flesh is with us from cradle to grave, there is never a time that we do not need this healing gift.

So, what about you? Do you have need of consolation? Do you have a wounded conscience? Have you lived as God did not matter and that you mattered most of all?

Are you plagued by sin and the temptations of the devil? Then this medicine of our Lord's body and blood is for you. It is for your healing and sanctification.

We give thanks to God during this Lenten season that through this salutary gift, Christ's healing hand reaches out to us and heals us.

"Take and eat!" "Drink of it all of you!" These are the words of your Great Physician, your Good Samaritan, Jesus Christ. Amen.