



Sermon Text: Luke 10  
Contextualized in the story of former refugee Kuoth Wiel  
The Rev. Kevin Jacobson, Global Mission Unit, ELCA

### “DEMONSTRATE LOVE ‘AND YOU WILL LIVE.’

I was reflecting on the story of Kuoth Wiel and The Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 on the day designated as International Women’s Day. It struck me that, like the early suffragettes in the 1900’s, Jesus and Kuoth both push their respective audiences for a day or a time to show pity, demonstrate love, and practice dignity and respect toward all: pity, love, dignity and respect for those we know, our neighbors, and those who are strangers, refugees and displaced people.

Gloria Steinem, world-renowned feminist, journalist and activist, once explained “The story of women’s struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist, nor to any one organization, but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights.” Human rights is a concept at the core of the parable of the Good Samaritan. It is also a cry throughout the story of Kuoth Wiel. Early in the parable, Jesus is “being tested,” pushed to answer a question by legal authorities. Throughout Kuoth’s journey, she is also tested by the violence and power that surround her. We as people of faith have no choice but to hear the cries of others, like the Samaritan and the strangers in Kuoth’s story did. We are called to press forward through a strong call to action. Jesus’ parable begins, “Do this, and you will live.” Demonstrate love, and you will live.

Perhaps the only way we can see ourselves as the Samaritan – as the one called to give help and healing to those in need – is to first recognize how often we have been the one left for dead along the road. Like the man along the road in the parable, Kuoth was

displaced, had lost her way, and was surrounded by violence throughout her young life. But through their struggles, both the man in the parable and Kuoth found hope, support and love from others who didn’t know them well. Once someone has been encountered by radical grace and love, it is hard to look at anything or anyone in quite the same way. Kuoth ends with words of advice to us all. “I hope that I can be a voice for those who might be seen as strangers.”

We are all invited into these stories in order to discover ourselves and to recognize that we belong to a community that is bound together by our shared values of love, dignity and respect. By an awareness of our common vulnerability and by a sense that God has worked through so many to care for us, we are invited to look around and care for those similarly in need: the refugee, the displaced, the hungry, the weak, the child, the poor.

The early suffragettes found the need to honor and celebrate women who were living in another context, different from their own background, while struggling for justice and equality. These stories invite us to think about what kind of person we want to be when we are confronted with the challenges of the stranger. Many of our communities have been formed and nurtured by a shared faith, ethnicity, experience, and tradition. There is nothing wrong with that, but we are called to reach out across our comfort zones with love, dignity and respect for all, so that we might all live stronger lives together.