

# Arts & Faith

Art and Commentary for Pentecost +5, Proper 10C by [Hovak Najarian](#)

## Introduction

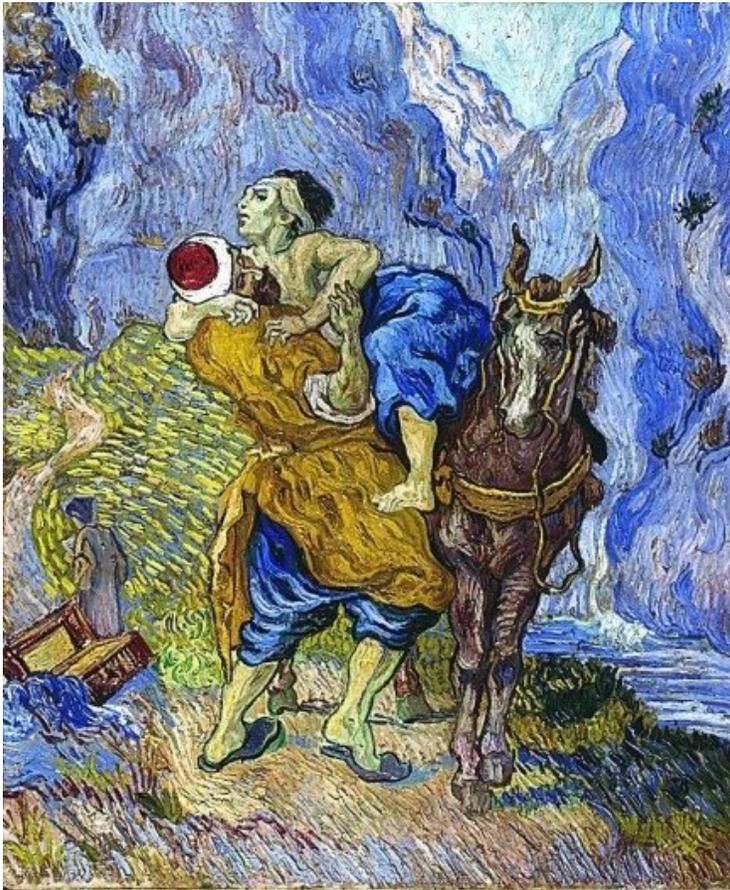
Greetings to everyone associated with St. Margaret's Sunday Morning Forum,

The Gospel for Sunday, July 10, 2022 is Luke 10:35-37. In response to a lawyer's questions about what one should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus said "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength and all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." The lawyer then asked "And who is my neighbor?" In response to this, Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The art is Vincent van Gogh's *The Good Samaritan* based on a painting by Eugene Delacroix. ~Hovak Najarian

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*The Good Samaritan* (after Delacroix), oil on canvas, 1890, Vincent van Gogh, 1853-1890  
Commentary by Hovak Najarian



Vincent van Gogh, *The Good Samaritan*, 1890, (After Delacroix). [This is van Gogh's "colorized" interpretation of Laurens' black and white lithograph of Delacroix' painting.]

[Above left] Eugene Delacroix, *The Good Samaritan*, o/c, 1849

[Above right] Jules Laurens' lithograph copy of Delacroix's painting.

In response to a lawyer's question, "And who is my neighbor?" Christ told a parable about a man who was traveling and beset by robbers. He was left lying by the roadside, stripped, beaten, and half dead. A priest saw him but passed by on the other side. A Levite did the same. A Samaritan, however, stopped and gave him aid. He lifted him onto his "beast" and took him to an inn and cared for him. The following day the Samaritan paid the innkeeper and asked him to continue caring for the man; saying if more money is needed he would pay when he returned. Christ asked rhetorically which of these three proved to be a neighbor to the man, and answered, "The one who showed mercy..." He then said, "Go and do likewise."

This parable was of particular interest to artists that were interested in stories of human warmth and compassion. Many artists, including Rembrandt, painted the parable of the Good Samaritan and in the early nineteenth century, Eugene Delacroix' painting of it was reproduced as a lithograph by Jules Laurens and published in a book. Vincent van Gogh's *The Good Samaritan* is an interpretation of a black and white reproduction (a reverse image) of Delacroix' painting.

In May of 1890, van Gogh was still a patient at the hospital at Saint-Remy. In warmer weather he would go into the fields to paint but he had been mostly indoors throughout the winter months. Books were comforting to him; in them he could study the paintings of artists he admired. While remaining indoors, he used reproductions from books as source material for his own paintings and empathized particularly with Delacroix's, *The Good Samaritan*. Van Gogh had several bouts of illness during the winter months and he himself was in need of compassion. The cause of his illness has not been determined with certainty even today.

To make a lithograph an image is drawn on a stone, the surface is prepared, and inked. When paper is placed over the inked stone and run through a press, the print that emerges as the paper is lifted is a reverse image of the drawing that was made on the stone. Hence Laurens' lithograph copy of Delacroix's composition is in reverse, and because van Gogh's composition followed the lithograph, it also is reversed.

The *interpretations* of paintings made by van Gogh at this time were not intended to be copies; instead, he painted subjects in the colors he believed would be appropriate. The reproductions were used as source material and were modified in much the same way a musician changes the orchestration or composes variations on the themes of other composers.

A few weeks after painting, *The Good Samaritan*, van Gogh boarded a train to Paris. After visiting his brother and his wife, and his recently born nephew, he settled in nearby Auvers-sur-Oise and was under the care of Dr. Paul-Fernand Gachet. The auditory and hallucinatory attacks from his

illness, however, became more frequent and van Gogh determined it would be for the good of all if he ended his life. He shot himself in the chest and died. When Vincent died, his brother, Theo, went into a physical and emotional decline and died six months later.

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