

Sunday 13th July 2025

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Gospel Reading

Luke 10.25-37

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ²⁶ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ ²⁷ He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’ ²⁸ And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ ³⁰ Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ ³⁷ He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

Other Readings: Amos 7.7-17

Psalms 82

Colossians 1.1-14

Homily

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbour as yourself”.

This was the answer given to Jesus by the Jewish lawyer in our gospel reading after he had asked him, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The lawyer’s response was to ask Jesus, “Who then is my neighbour?” [Pause].

Jesus goes on to tell the crowd The Parable of the Good Samaritan. It’s a familiar story to many of us. At face value it speaks of an unidentified man, robbed and beaten, and left to die by the roadside. He had been travelling down the steep and dangerous road between Jerusalem and Jericho. A notorious road for travellers called the Road of Blood. He was a man in trouble, and he needed help.

As we know, a priest and Levite, both Jews, passed by and ignored him, but the Samaritan, seen as an outsider from Jewish society, had pity on him. He was the one who cared for him, bound his wounds and looked after him, at a financial cost to himself, until the traveller had recovered at the inn.

Today, we generally interpret this story as one which requires us to act compassionately, as the Samaritan did, and to exhibit good moral behaviour in all situations as an example to others, because to love our neighbour is to love God.

However, if we *just* view it in this way, we'll miss the rest of what Jesus was trying to teach us here. It's important to view scripture in its original context, appreciating what life was like in the time of Jesus and in the time of those writing. A significant key to opening the meaning of this story is knowing the cultural relationship that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. To put it bluntly, they didn't get on! But this story, like many in Luke's Gospel, shares a central message of God's salvation for *all* his people, whether Jew or Gentile. It is about God's clear and unambiguous message of welcome, compassion, and love for others.

The Samaritan displays a compassion for the injured man, who is most likely a Jew, that was not restrained by national, racial or religious boundaries. This was, as Jesus intended, in direct contrast to the priest and the Levite. Their narrow definition of neighbour, as only a fellow Jew, and their strict observation of the purity laws made them shamefully ignore the injured man. For Jesus, the Law of Moses, so rigidly adhered to by the Jews was out of step with what God now wanted from his people. It was no longer aligned with God's universal message of hope and salvation for all.

You'll recall that Jesus didn't answer the lawyers original question - "Who is my neighbour?" That question was left hanging in the story's original telling, and it's a question that hangs in the air for us modern day disciples too. The story contains a direct challenge to the listener or reader – then, and now. One challenge is to begin to view the situation from the victim's/other person's perspective and then follow God's call on our lives to act towards them with compassion and love, just as the Samaritan did. Additionally, we should remember that Jesus was telling the Jews, and us, in a very pointed way, that God's salvation had been extended beyond the boundaries of his chosen people Israel and that they needed to play their part, changing their ways, to accept that all are welcome in God's Kingdom. Jesus preached a gospel of hospitality and love. This story is a powerful and uncompromising call to action and a signpost for us all to walk the way of God's kingdom and to be part of the fulfilment of God's vision for us all. Jesus is saying that his followers must not live just for themselves, but for others – their neighbours – and to recognise 'neighbour' in its widest possible sense.

This is a radical and uncompromising way of being which holds as much challenge for us today as it did for the Jews in Jesus's time. Does this story give us pause for thought when it comes to the plight of the homeless? Do we walk on the other side of the road when we see a man or woman begging in a shop doorway? Do we simply offer that person a few coins? Do we ever ask the big questions about why the need to beg has become so prevalent in our 21st century society? Are we interested in the human being sitting in a dirty duvet in the shop doorway? Can we put ourselves in that person's shoes? Should we ask such questions about others who are vulnerable? What about those who are sick, weak, imprisoned, migrants, the unemployed? The list goes on.

Just being a member of the Body of Christ or worshipping in Church does not satisfy the command to 'love God and love your neighbour'. Biblical love, as expressed by Jesus in this parable, transcends geography, race, religion, socio-economic status, sexuality, gender, personal preferences, biases, and convenience. We must love all equally and well. And Love means moving towards others – helping them, seeking that which is right, just, equitable.

By the end of the parable the lawyer knew the answer to his question. He probably wished he hadn't asked it - he certainly got more than he was expecting. Thankfully, he did ask it because it signposts to us the need to place ourselves in his shoes; we should ask the question too. 'Who is my neighbour?' If we're following in the way of Christ, we know the answer too.

"Go and do likewise". Amen.

Conversation Questions

1. What does Jesus's approach to 'Who is my neighbour?' mean to you personally? Are there barriers and boundaries, opinions and biases, (conscious and unconscious), that you need to change or lift in order to see and accept all those who are your neighbours? Are you being a good neighbour to all with whom you have contact?
2. What do people in the wider community outside of church think of your worshipping community? Do they see and experience an open, welcoming, hospitable, friendly church? Have you ever asked a non-churchgoer what their opinion of your church is?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

Gracious Father,
by the obedience of Jesus
you brought salvation to our wayward world:
draw us into harmony with your will,
that we may find all things restored in him,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

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