

AM Luke 10:25-37 Good Samaritans?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 November 2024

Preacher: Rev David White

[0:00] Our Bible reading this morning is a very familiar Bible passage and sometimes I think, no let's put this another way.

Paula and I have been in our quiet time looking at a guide which is called Between the Lines and it's written by a chap called Glenn Scrivner.

And it's working through the Old Testament which took us about a year and a half and now we're in the New Testament and it picks out some of the things from the Gospel, some of the stories that Jesus told, some of the incidents from the Gospels and then incidents and items from the letters and ending with Revelation.

And some of the things that I thought I knew so well, it's really shone a different light on it, looking at it from a different perspective and we found that a real blessing.

So I hope as we look at this passage this morning, which is the parable of the Good Samaritan, which if you have a Bible, is on page 1046.

[1:11] I'll give you a minute to find that. That we might look to God to show us something new from his word this morning, something to touch our hearts.

So the parable of the Good Samaritan. And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

He said to him, What is written in the law? How do you read it? And 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 neighbor as yourself.

And he said to him, You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live. But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

Jesus replied, A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

[2:30] Now by chance, a priest was going down that road and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

Then he set him on his animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day, he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, Take care of him and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.

Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among robbers? He said, The one who showed him mercy.

And Jesus said to him, You go and do likewise. Amen. And may God bless his word to us this day.

[3:52] Take your seats. Take your seats. Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that your word was inspired by your spirit. And I pray, Lord, that you would wing your word to our hearts and minds today so that we might really have heard from you.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. There's an event that takes place annually here in Dumfries on the third Saturday in June as the town celebrates Good Neighbours.

Good Neighbours. I thought it would be a good entry into this morning's passage. This festival acknowledges Dumfries becoming a royal borough in 1186. It's a very old town, this town.

Part of the celebrations includes reading the Royal Charter together with riding the marches. That's riding the boundaries of the old town of Dumfries.

[5 : 20] And this all began, it surprised me when I looked into this, this all began quite recently actually. This all began in 1932 from an idea by the town's librarian and Mr. G.W. Shirley.

He also penned the song Queen of the South. I don't know the song Queen of the South apparently. He penned the song Queen of the South. The festival got its name, this is interesting, the festival got its name from criminals who would be instructed by a judge to be good neighbours or face dire consequences.

So that's where the term good neighbours apparently comes from. But what does it mean for us today to be good neighbours? And what did Jesus say?

And what does the Bible say about being a good neighbour? The context for this morning's Bible passage is a lawyer asking Jesus a question.

This lawyer would have been recognised as an expert in the law. In Jewish society there was no distinction between the civil and religious law.

[6 : 37] And in the passage we read we note that he was putting Jesus to the test. Another interpretation of the word used could be interpreted as tempting Jesus or seeking to trap Jesus in something that he might say.

This was not unusual. This happened quite a lot. So the initial question asked by this lawyer was teacher what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

Jesus as he often did turned the question back on the lawyer by asking two questions of his own. I found that really good thing to do when you find yourselves in conversations with Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons.

it's quite good to turn the question back and ask a question yourself and Jesus did this all the time. He asked this lawyer two questions.

What is written in the law and how do you read it? it's very clear that for Jesus the Old Testament the Old Testament the big part of the Bible the first part of the Bible is an unerring standard of faith and practice.

[8 : 00] Jesus often quoted the Old Testament. So the lawyer replied 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.

In making this response this lawyer is quoting Deuteronomy 6 verses 4 and 5 and Leviticus 19 verse 18 I'll read those to you.

Deuteronomy 6 4 and 5 Hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

And then Leviticus 19 verse 18 You shall not take revenge or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people but shall love your neighbour as yourself.

I am the Lord. You've answered correctly Jesus said do this and you will live. But then we read that the lawyer desiring to justify himself said to Jesus and who is my neighbour?

[9 : 17] By asking this question this lawyer was seeking to find loopholes in the commandment to love your neighbour as yourself. It seems clear to me that from his attitude that he wasn't genuinely seeking to be taught by Jesus at all.

The question he asks is therefore an improper question because the lawyer was trying to exclude responsibility for others making some people non-neighbours.

the question he should have asked should have been how can I be a loving neighbour? And so Jesus goes on to tell this parable.

Let's just have a look at that this parable again. A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a priest was going down that road and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite when he came to the place and so him passed by on the other side.

[10 : 41] But a Samaritan as he journeyed came to where he was and when he saw him he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds pouring on oil and wine then set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper saying take care of him and whatever more you spend I will repay when I come back.

Which of these do you think proved to be neighbor to the man who fell among robbers? He said the one who showed him mercy and Jesus said to him you go and do likewise.

the lawyer in this story sorry excuse me I think it's good just to pause for a minute and just think about the characters first of all the interaction between this lawyer who was probably a Pharisee and Jesus who this lawyer refers to as teacher or rabbi so that's the context and who are the characters in the parable?

So who are the characters in the parable? Well as a victim we don't know his name he's not characterized by his race or his religion or his occupation he's simply a victim and then of course there's the priest the priest would have been a descendant of Aaron whose job was to officiate in the temple and then a Levite came along a member of the tribe of Levi not a priest but would have assisted the priest and both these men were religious and legal guardians of the truth and then we have the Samaritan again his name is unknown and the innkeeper I think it's difficult for us in our society in our context in our to understand just how shocking this story would have been when Jesus first told it the victim a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho a descent of 3200 feet that's about 975 metres and a distance of 18 miles which is roughly from here to

[13:23] Moffat so 29 kilometres and apparently this steep and rocky road which was notoriously dangerous was lined with caves that made really good hideouts for bandits and bandits the historian Josephus notes that travellers on this road would often carry weapons to protect themselves should they be attacked so dangerous was the road this man the victim in Jesus' parable was savagely attacked stripped and beaten until he was half dead both the priest and the Levite see this man but both passed by on the other side of the road and the fact that they saw this man makes them culpable to do something to help but they put as much distance as they possibly can between this man and themselves by passing by on the other side of the road and that begs the question well why did they do that perhaps foremost they were fearful people concerned for their own safety they saw what had happened to this man and were concerned for themselves perhaps by stopping they too would have been robbed or worse in Jewish culture it was believed that contact with a dead body would defile a person so to avoid uncleanness they passed by in order to maintain ritual purity how ironic is that yet the

Samaritan did help he showed compassion and this is the turning point in the story just to get an idea of just how shocking it would have been to people that heard this story the first time Jews were regarded and Samaritanism was regarded Jews regarded Samaritanism as a heresy which involved the corrupt worship of Yahweh mixed with worship of other so called foreign gods Jews regarded Samaritans as half breeds Samaritans were descendants of the mixed population occupying this area of Israel following the conquest by Syria in 722 BCE they opposed the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem which you can read about in Ezra chapter 4 and Nehemiah chapter 2 and they constructed their own place of worship on Mount Gerizim conversely culturally it would have been unthinkable for a Samaritan to help a Jew if in fact this victim was a Jew however regardless of the nationality or faith of the victim

Jesus' audience and the lawyer were Jews and as a result would have been seriously challenged regarding their prejudice against this Samaritan as I've already said as far as the Jews were concerned Samaritans were ceremonially unclean and socially outcast and religiously heretical so let's look again at exactly what the Samaritan did first of all the Samaritan saw the man and he stopped and he went to the man and he had compassion on this man compassion is an incredible word the original word for compassion means gut wrenching pity he felt physically for this man and his situation he was emotionally removed to respond we told in the text that both the priest and the Levite saw this man this victim but both were passed by on the other side of the road as I've already said places much physical distance between themselves and this man as possible one of my favorite accounts in the

Bible is the anointing of Jesus by a sinful woman that we read about in Luke 7 verse 36 following Simon also a Pharisee and the host of the meal to which Jesus is invited has decided that this woman an intruder to the party is a hopeless sinner she's a prostitute she's beyond the page as far as Simon's concerned and Jesus should know this it says in the passage if Jesus were a prophet he would know what kind of woman this is but in verse 44 Jesus asks Simon a very telling question he says to Simon do you see this woman do you really see this woman or have you made your mind up about this woman already do you see her in her need do you see that she's expressing love for me you see

I certainly believe from the passage that she's already met Jesus before and she knows that she's had her sins forgiven and she's lavishing this anointing on Jesus this love for Jesus do you really

see this woman the priest and the Levite both saw this half dead man but did nothing to help they didn't really see or didn't want to see him at all there's a story I was told about a theological seminary in the United States and the class were asked there's about 20 in the class and the class were asked to prepare a presentation a sermon if you like to reflect something of the character of Jesus and they were given seven days to do so and they were given a deadline a time at which they had to appear to make their presentation in the meantime the lecturers got together and one of them was dressed as if he had been attacked and beaten as if he was homeless in old clothes and he was propped against a wall on the journey that they had to take to get back to the seminary and the way I was told the story only three of these students stopped to ask this man if he needed help all the rest were so focused on what they'd been asked to do and the deadline they'd been given they didn't even see him they just walked by the

[20 : 53] Samaritan in contrast went to the victim and without regard for his own safety he bandaged his wounds and he poured oil and wine on them then he put the man on his own animal and brought him to an inn to take care of him notice he also covered the cost of the victim's ongoing care and shelter he gave the innkeeper two denarii which was the equivalent of two days wages in those times I also discovered the rate for accommodation at an inn in those days was one twelfth of a denarii so he leaves more than enough more than enough to care for this man and he says to the innkeeper take care of him and whatever more you need I will repay you when I come back Jesus asks the expert in the law which of these three do you think proved to be neighbour to the man who fell among robbers in asking the lawyer this question what exactly was Jesus asking him to do who was

Jesus really referring to when he speaks about loving our neighbour in Luke chapter 6 Jesus speaks on a similar vein Luke chapter 6 verse 27 but I say to you hear you who hear love your enemies do good to those who hate you bless those who curse you pray for those who abuse you verse 32 of the same passage if you love those who love you what benefit is that to you for even sinners love those who love them and if you do good to those who do good to you what benefit is that to you for even sinners do the same and then in verse 36 he says be merciful even as your father is merciful to love God means to show mercy to those in real need regardless of their ethnicity their religion or their social standing and this teaching of

Jesus cuts to the heart of today's parable eternal life is found not just in knowing the commandments but in doing them eternal life of course is found in coming before our Lord and confessing our sin and repenting of our sin and turning and putting our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ but it's not just enough to know about the commandments doing the commandments to love one's neighbor means showing compassion and care that includes those with whom we might not otherwise have a relationship Leviticus 19 verse 34 when a stranger sojourns within your land you shall not do him wrong you shall love him as yourself it says it really is Samaritan that Jesus wants the lawyer to identify himself with so let's look again at the parable if my neighbor is the good

Samaritan then who am I am I who fell into the hands of robbers so let's look a bit more closely at the victim the fallenness of this man is evident he's going down from Jerusalem the earthly count about of the heavenly Zion and he's walking towards the outskirts of the land he's literally and metaphorically walking away from God and he falls among robbers and he's beaten and he's abandoned and he's left half dead remember the two disciples walking away from Jerusalem after the crucifixion totally downhearted and dejected we had thought they say to one another that he was the one and the risen Lord Jesus comes alongside them and walks with them and as he breaks bread and eats with them then they realize that he's the

Lord and they return back to Jerusalem rejoicing what happens to this man is the equivalent of what might take place in our city or town centres late at night in fact from a personal perspective this happened my eldest son James suffered with mental health issues and he was attacked by a gang of youths under the bridge that central station there's a bridge underneath and he was attacked there and we went to visit him in hospital so it happens it happens today these things happen today and I just wonder if Jesus is wanting us to see that without him the predicament of this victim is our predicament and if so what hope do we have well certainly from this parable we've no hope from religion and we've no hope from the law the priest representing religion and the

[26 : 17] Levite representing the law both passed by on the other side who would today's equivalent of the victim and the Samaritan be well as I give this a little more thought I think the

victim the victims are all those in our community who do not know God and who are burdened by life and that would have included ourselves before we became believers so who's the Samaritan who are the Samaritans it's interesting that when this passage is read in Christian circles we tend to automatically identify ourselves with the Samaritan and if we're in relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and we're in fellowship with other believers and we're part of a church fellowship and we are disciples of Jesus then we are the good Samaritans so we have the potential to be the good Samaritans reality is that our only hope as each one of us travels through this life is the beautiful stranger the Lord Jesus Christ who took pity on us who was moved in his bowels with compassion in the New Testament this verb is used only of Jesus in all the following Bible references Jesus is the subject of the verb compassion Matthew 9 36 when he saw the crowds he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd in Mark 1 verse 41 moved with pity he stretched out his hand and touched him and said I will be clean this is an encounter between Jesus and a man with leprosy I wonder when was the last time that anyone had physically touched this man who had leprosy Jesus touched him and healed him and then in Luke 7 verse 13 and when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her and said to her do not weep Jesus then restored life to the widow's son having compassion is what Jesus does it's the verb that describes his emotional response to us there we are or there we were in our half dead wretchedness religion had been no help the law may have flagged up our need but was help us to change our situation and the priest and the Levite passed us by in contrast Jesus comes near takes pity on us has compassion for us and pours on wine cleansing our wounds biblically of course this is a symbol of blood the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all our sin and he pours on oil biblically a symbol of the spirit he carries us he heals us and he pays for it all the innkeeper is given two denarii more than enough for any further care for this victim so we can assume that when the Samaritan did come back perhaps the third day then he will bring to completion the work he's begun he doesn't forget about the man so have you put yourself in the sandals of the victim the fallen man in the story have you or have I appreciated the love and care of the good

Samaritan John tells us that Jesus came to his own people meaning the Jews but they did not receive him they didn't recognize him but to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but born of God by putting ourselves in the place of the victim in this parable we experience the compassion of this loving outsider and then we were enabled to go and do likewise did you notice how the lawyer could not even bring himself to verbally acknowledge the Samaritan as the good neighbor why because he was bound by the letter of the law and his own prejudices instead of the spirit of the law and grace all he could utter in answer to

[31 : 48] Jesus' question was the one who showed him mercy in light of this perhaps fresh perspective of the good Samaritan how might we individually and corporately respond I've noticed a banner recently on the fencing outside St Michael's Church and I've kept meaning to read it but generally I'm in the car and it's not appropriate to sit reading banners when you're sat in the car but it's advertising something called Light Up a Life which is probably linked to a hospice movement and that got me thinking about a time I used to be a minister of a Baptist church in Fort William and the Highland Hospice movement organized a light up a life where bereaved families could sponsor a light on the Christmas tree in memory of their beloved the memory of their loved ones and I was asked to speak at this service which followed and I thought what do I say certainly what people who have recently bereaved don't need is a list of platitudes or simple

Bible verses they don't need that but having experienced salvation available to me then I was led to 2 Corinthians chapter 1 where we read comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God for as we share abundantly in Christ's suffering so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too and that's what I spoke to them about I spoke to them about a God who is full of love and compassion and who understands and who knows their situation and who wants them to know that he cares and how can that be shown it can only be shown through people who know and love him in the flesh if you like to to show them the love that's necessary the lawyer's original question to Jesus was teacher what shall I do to inherit eternal life and Jesus was to affirm the two great commandments to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves he instructs us to do this and you will live but the lawyer sought to establish boundaries concerning application of these commandments so he asked

Jesus who is my neighbor and we have a tendency to do that we create the barriers after the telling of this extraordinary parable Jesus asked the lawyer which of these three meaning the priest the Levite or the Samaritan proved to be neighbor to the man who fell among thieves and he replied the one who showed him mercy Jesus said go and do likewise so eternal life is found in a relationship in and through the Lord Jesus Christ with our Heavenly Father but knowing the commandments is not enough doing the commandments is what's required the love God means to love God means to show mercy to those who are in need mercy sees only the need and responds with compassion let's pray together let's pray together Heavenly Father we come before you this morning having worked our way through this parable the Lord Jesus told challenges about the barriers which might stop us from being the good neighbors that we could be and help us Lord to see the need and to respond appropriately help us to love you and to love our neighbor as ourselves for Jesus sake Amen