

Who is my Neighbour?

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[0 : 0 0] You might like to keep that passage open. Sure, that's probably the habit of many of you. I'm going to pray for us before we begin. I'm going to ask God that he might help us as we get into his word.

He might open our hearts, that he might open our ears, he might open his word to us. So please pray with me. Our Father, your word has so many great things for us to hear, but my mouth is unworthy to speak of them and our ears are unworthy to hear them.

So Lord, when we come here tonight and we open up your word, we need your grace. We need your generosity to us to be a God who gives to people who don't deserve.

Lord, please do that tonight amongst us. And we thank you so much for the assurance of your grace that we've seen in your son Jesus, giving not only his words, but his life for people who didn't deserve it.

Lord, please be with us tonight. I pray that you might help me to speak words, only words that are true and helpful and glorifying to you. And Lord, we pray all of this in the name of your son.

[1 : 0 8] Amen. Now, we just got married, as you heard before, three months ago to the day, which is very exciting for us. We're living in Kate's parents' granny flat until the end of the year, which is an interesting place to live.

Now, occasionally, Kate's parents go away. They do some stuff in Queensland, and they're away right now, which means that we can kind of take charge of the entire house, which is really quite exciting.

We get to rein the whole property. So we like to invade the upstairs of their house when they go away, and when we're on college holidays and stuff like that, and set up a fortress at their dining table.

And we do really exciting and fun stuff there, like study. So we set up. And this dining room is really cool because you can kind of see all the way to the back fence of the backyard.

You can see the driveway, and then you can see the side fence as well. So one day, a couple of weeks ago, actually, we're sitting there, we're studying, working really hard, and Kate looks up from the book that she's reading to see a guy about 15 years old.

[2 : 1 3] And he's walked up the vacant block, up the hill in the vacant block next door, and he's jumped over our fence. He's kind of climbed over the fence into our little carport area, and he's kind of scooted up the driveway.

And Kate said, there's a guy climbing over our fence and going up our driveway. And I was like, okay. And Kate was like, now you've got to understand, Kate is the sweetest, loveliest, gentlest, most patient and understanding girl ever.

And Kate sees this guy, and she's like, that's it. I'm declaring war on teenagers everywhere. And so she calls up her dad, and she says, we need to get the fence built higher because there's 14-year-old kids climbing over a fence onto our property.

They have no right to do this. Who do they think they are? This is our property. And so I'm kind of thinking, well, you know, I'm sure this kid has good reasons. He might have a long walk to get around. And Kate said, I don't care how far he has to walk.

He can't go on our property whatsoever. And then as we kind of, we calm down, Kate picks up a book again and goes back to writing her talk on Matthew 5, 7.

[3 : 19] Blessed are the merciful. And then we both thought, oh. Now, I think I've actually misrepresented Kate. I don't think she was as angry as that. But I mean, it makes for a good story.

Now, I haven't lived in the neighborhood for very long. I've lived there for three months. I don't know who the people who live on the street are yet. I don't know who my neighbors are. If it was the next door neighbor's kid jumping the fence, I'd be fine with that.

Because I grew up playing backyard cricket, constantly hitting sixes and outs over the next door neighbor's fence and having to climb the fence and go next door. I understand what it's like to be a kid in the neighborhood chasing his tennis balls around everyone's house.

Now, if it was the next door neighbor's kid chasing his ball, I'd be fine. If they live near me, it's fine. But if they don't, well, what are they doing on my parents' property?

Now, where do you draw the line? Where do you draw the line? And as a Christian, who do I have to be nice to and who can I just forget about?

[4 : 24] Where do you draw the line there? Do I have to look after every beggar that I see? Do I have to soothe every baby that I hear crying? Do I have to pay every window cleaner that I kind of pull up next to?

Where do you draw the line? How close does a person have to be to you for you to be compassionate towards them? So I guess what I'm still trying to figure out on my street and I guess more existentially in my life is who is my neighbor?

We know that question, don't we? But exactly who is my neighbor? Well, a man asked Jesus the exact same question in the passage that we just read.

And it's an important question. It's important because it's asked in the context of life and death, heaven or hell. Who inherits eternal life and who doesn't?

It's an important question. Who exactly is my neighbor? Now there's a bit of a background clash to the parable that Jesus tells you. So if you look in verse 25 in your Bibles there, there's an expert in the law, a lawyer who comes up to Jesus and he says, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

[5 : 38] And it's a good question. But the problem is, he's trying to test Jesus. Straight off, we're dealing with a guy here who doesn't really honestly ask this question.

He just wants to satisfy himself and prove himself to be right in his own position. And Jesus sees straight through that. And he basically says, okay, lawyer, let's play your game.

What's written in the law about this kind of thing? And so the lawyer's response, if you look in verse 27, he says, love the Lord your God with all your heart and all of your soul and all of your strength and with all of your mind and love your neighbor as yourself.

And Jesus says, yeah, that's right. If you do this, you will live. Do this and you will live there in verse 28. But you notice that's all he says there.

He doesn't give any exceptions. He doesn't say, oh, well, yeah, yeah, yeah, there's all that. But really, you know, if it's a Tuesday and you've had four nights sleep the night before, I'll give you a break. You know, he doesn't leave any wiggle room.

[6 : 44] He just says, yes, that's it. And so the lawyer gets a little bit nervous. He thinks, well, surely there are people who I don't have to love. Surely there are people who aren't my neighbors.

And so you remember that he's trying to test Jesus. Now the shoe's on the other foot. He's the one that looks bad. He wants to justify himself is what Luke says in verse 29. And so he asks Jesus, and just who is my neighbor then, Jesus?

If I need to love my neighbor, who is that? Back on you. You've got to do the accusing now. And so Jesus, to answer that question, he tells a story.

It's a famous story. We know it really well. It's enshrined in, what do you call it? Stained glass window right over here. You can check it out after the service if you like. It's quite a nice window. There you go.

It's very colorful. Jesus tells a story about a man who goes down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Now when we say that, Jericho's actually north of Jerusalem, but we're going down because Jerusalem's on a massive mountain.

[7 : 44] And so they're coming down. Now it's a gnarly road. It's a really rough road that goes from Jerusalem to Jericho. It descends a thousand meters in altitude, a kilometer in altitude, all in about 27 kilometers.

And there are bandits hiding in caves everywhere just waiting to come out and get you. Now have you ever been on a road like that? I was on a road similar to that one.

So when I was in year 11, I went to South Africa for a couple of weeks. We were going to be picked up by some friends from the airport in Cape Town, but our plane was delayed. We got delayed in Perth by about four or five hours because, well, they never told us why we had to stop in Perth and maybe someone lost the keys to the plane or something.

Anyway, we get delayed for hours and hours and hours and we miss our connecting flight in Johannesburg and so we get to Cape Town at midnight. We were supposed to get there while the sun was still up and we're really late.

And so we're like, I said to my friend, we've got to get in touch with Scott because he's got to come and pick us up. So I'm looking around everywhere for a pay phone. I find a pay phone and look in my wallet and realise, I don't have any South African money.

[8 : 51] I just have travellers checks and 25 cents Australian. So there I am trying to ram Australian coins into this South African pay phone when a security guard notices us and our stupidity and he comes over and gives us 25 rand cents or whatever they are.

And so we call Scott and we say, Scott, we're at the airport, we're late, you've got to come pick us up. Scott, and so he says, yeah, yeah, okay. And then we hear some talking, some kind of heated discussion in the background and so Scott's kind of talking to his wife about whether or not it's a good idea to come and pick us up at this hour.

And I said, Scott, what's going on? And he said, oh, it's alright, it's alright. We're going to come and pick you up. It's just, you know, Hayley and I are a little bit worried because the road from the airport goes through Kailicha.

Dun, dun, dun. Now, if you've never heard of Kailicha, Kailicha is like a massive, large parts of it or a massive slum all in this big part of Cape Town.

It's got about 2.1 million people living there and it's really, really super dangerous. Now, Cape Town, two months ago in August, Cape Town was rated the fifth deadliest city in the world.

[9 : 58] Now, the area that we had to drive through to get out of the airport is responsible for 35% of the carjacking in the fifth most deadliest city in the world and that's our road that we're going to go through.

Now, picture that. That's our road here. It's a road where people get carjacked and mugged and all that kind of stuff and it happens to this guy who's going down from Jerusalem to Jericho.

It says, when he fell into the hands of robbers, they stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away leaving him half dead. Now, a priest just happens to be going down that road and he sees the beaten man.

Now, the priest is like the pillar of religion in Jewish society. He works at the temple in Jerusalem. He's the guy responsible for making sacrifices for your evil deeds so that you can be okay.

He's God's servant in the world and it just so happened that he's going by and you think, oh, he happens upon this man, he's been beaten. You think, oh yeah, help is around the corner and then he just walks past on the other side and then a Levite comes along.

[11 : 11] A Levite is kind of like the priest's assistant and you kind of think, oh well, you know, snooty priest, high and mighty above all the regular people. The Levite, he's a bit closer to the common man so, you know, he's got his finger on the pulse of the people, he's going to come along, he's going to help and he just walks past.

Now, these guys worked in Jerusalem but evidently there were so many priests and Levites at the time that not all of them lived in Jerusalem. They kind of had to commute to Jerusalem. We know what that's like. Now, if you notice, they're coming down from Jerusalem, they're heading away from Jerusalem.

They're not going to work and they're not in a hurry, they're going home. There's nothing that they have to worry about being late for. They're just kind of leisurely going on their home after a day's work.

They have no, there's no reason given in the text for us that they walked by, they just went without excuse. Now, Jewish society and Australian society are really different in so many ways between first century Jewish society and 21st century Australian society but there is one thing that they have in common which I think is really cool.

They love the underdog. We love the underdog. They love the underdog back in the first century in the Jewish world. Now, we love trashing famous people and our leaders and all that kind of stuff.

[12 : 35] There's just something inherently Australian about that tall poppy syndrome. Every day when the little person triumphs, we celebrate that. Now, it was the same in Jewish society.

Apparently, they had this way of telling stories where they'd grab two big time kind of central figures in Jewish society, two big celebrities and they'd tell a story about how those two people fail and then this everyday Jewish guy, kind of your everyday Sam or whatever, he succeeds.

So, say you've got a woman who has some kind of problem or dilemma and she can't solve it. Now, the king comes along, fail, he can't solve the problem and a prophet comes along, fail, he can't solve the problem and then your everyday Goldstein guy comes along and he has the problem, he has a solution for the problem.

It's amazing. Triumph of the little guy, it's great. Now, that's a typical Jewish way of telling stories. Now, if you've had this priest come past, fail, Levite comes past, he fails, your audience, the Jewish lawyer and all the people around him are thinking, oh, I know this one.

This is where an everyday guy like me comes along and saves the day. Now, you can imagine their shock when Jesus bursts that little daydream bubble with the next person who comes along who isn't your Jewish battler.

[13 : 58] He's a Samaritan. Now, you've got to realise, Jews and Samaritans aren't the best of friends. Because this parable has been told for 2,000 years, we've kind of come to associate Samaritan with good stuff.

You know, we've got the charity Samaritan's Purse. When we hear Samaritan, we think good person. In actual fact, in the first century, Jews and Samaritans hated each other. The Samaritans set up a rival religion to the Jews in Jerusalem and they claim that it's the only true, pure way to worship God.

And if you're a Jew, that is a slap in the face in the first century. And so, from the Jewish perspective, they say, no, no, no, we've got the temple, God lives with us. These Samaritans are liars.

They're sinful. They're evil. And so, they absolutely hate the Samaritans. And you see that at the end of the story.

You get to the point where the lawyer gets to the point where he can't even say the word Samaritan. He has to substitute the one who had mercy. We'll come to that a bit later on. Now, the Samaritan person is the hated one, the distrusted one, the outcast one.

[15 : 10] Now, who is that when you look at Sydney? Who's that in Sydney? Is that the person with the kind of painted black face on hey-hey? Or is it the person whose colour is a little bit harder to wash off?

Is it the sex offender in Sydney? Is it the loud, violent teenager from another country? Who is that in Sydney? The person who is hated, distrusted, and outcast in our society.

Plonk that person in your mind in this story. And then look at what this person does. Have a look at verse 33 through to 35. Now, I want you to kind of, with your eyes, this might be hard to do unless you've got x-ray vision, just kind of circle with your eyes every time you see a verb in these verses.

Now, you remember the verbs from English? They're doing words like go. Now, have a look at this. In verse 33, I'll read it. Have a look for your verbs. But as the Samaritan travelled, but a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine and then, he put the man on his own donkey, he took him to an inn and took care of him.

[16 : 22] The next day, he took out two silver coins and he gave them to the innkeeper. Look after him, he said. And when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have had.

You've got the priest and the Levite who just walk past, walk past and that's all they do. But the Samaritan does not stop doing. He just gives and does and cares and pours and looks after and takes and reimburses all the way through there.

He doesn't stop. Luke is at pains to draw this out that this guy is an action man. He just keeps going. And you remember, this Samaritan is, in the Jewish mind, the dirtiest, the lowest, the most hated.

Now, Jesus asked in verse 36 to the lawyer that he's talking to, which of these three do you think was the neighbour? And the lawyer is so disgusted, so unwilling to accept the premise of what Jesus is suggesting here that, as we said, he doesn't even say Samaritan, he just says, oh, the guy who had mercy on him.

Now, that's the story. So, what's Jesus telling this lawyer guy? What's he trying to teach here? Well, there are two big questions that we came across in there and there's two big lessons, I think.

[17 : 50] And the first one isn't the one that jumps out at you the fastest and the most dramatically. It wasn't the first one that jumped out at me. But it has to do with that first question that the lawyer asks up in verse 25.

Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? The first lesson that this lawyer needs to learn is actually from the man in the ditch.

This lesson is that he needs to accept compassion. And that's exactly what this lawyer didn't get. He didn't get that he had to accept compassion, mercy, love from someone else.

Now, have a look at what he suggests that the law says he has to do to inherit eternal life in verse 27. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, strength, and love your neighbour as yourself.

Now, the first one, loving God, that's exactly what every Jew, it's called the Shema, it comes from Deuteronomy 6.5, it's what every Jew had to say, recite every day. He knew it backwards.

[18 : 52] And the second one there is from Leviticus 19.18, love your neighbour as yourself. They are deeply ingrained in what it means to be a Jew who lives by the law. Now, this is the one thing that I think he's forgotten.

Those laws that he quoted to Jesus were given to God, given by God to Israel and they assume that something has already happened. You remember the story back in Exodus.

God brings Israel out of Egypt, out of slavery and brings them into a new land and he gives them these laws. Now, when these instructions were given, God had already saved them from slavery.

He'd already delivered them, already given them life. These instructions that God gave them, love me, love your neighbours, were a response to what God had already done.

The mercy and compassion and love and generosity that he'd already give them. These laws were never a way to say, please God, save us. They were always meant to be a way of saying, God, thank you for saving us.

[20 : 00] thank you for drawing us out. Now we belong to you. They were never a way to get salvation. They were never a way to impress God or get his favour.

They were always a way of saying, thank you for having mercy on me. Thank you for having compassion on me and rescuing me when I'd done nothing to earn that.

Obedience is not a please. It's a thank you. Thank you, God, for your generosity. So if you believe God has done something for you, had compassion on you, been generous towards you, then you'll live a life of obedience.

But the lawyer didn't get that. He didn't get that forgiveness, adoption, new life, eternal life are available as a free gift from God.

That they're given when you come to Jesus and you say, I belong to you. Now, refusing to keep those commands to love God and to love others is like turning around to God and saying, you've done nothing for me.

[21 : 10] You've done nothing. And that's where the lawyer is at. Jesus says to him, the neighbours that you're supposed to love in that command, love your neighbours, they're not just your buddies.

They're not just Christians or in that day followers of God, Yahweh. They're not just people who obey the laws of our society.

They're people like the Samaritan who normally you hate with everything that you're made of. But the lawyer can't accept that.

And you can see once again by the way that he answers Jesus in the end, he just does not accept that he has to love the Samaritan, people who are different from him.

He can't do it. And he's effectively saying to God, whatever you may have done for me, whatever you may be offering me, it's not enough for me to love people like that.

[22 : 23] He doesn't get that love, obedience, compassion aren't a please. They're a thank you God for what you've done for me.

And if you've done this for me, I'll do anything for you. So what about you? The rest of the book of Luke goes on and tells us about how Jesus is like that Samaritan.

He came into this world because he has compassion. He looked at us and saw the pain and the injustice and the brokenness and the unhappiness of this world, the sinfulness of this world and how it's become lost from God.

And he saw that that was caused by our self-centeredness, by a history of something like 12 billion people apparently who have ever lived, who have chosen to live without God.

And so look around at the results of that in our world today. Not only that, but God waits to judge mankind for rejecting him.

[23 : 30] Jesus saw us there on that road, keeled up and waiting to die. And he had compassion and brought healing. He brought healing by living a perfect, God-centered, God-loving, others-loving life and then dying as a criminal, complete opposite.

And when he died, he took all of our guilt to himself and with himself into the ground. And when he came back from the dead, he defeated the power, the ownership, the slavery that sin has over us.

And now he offers us a new start. We are not a slave to selfishness anymore. You can escape that. You can escape a life which is just about empty gain and clawing at other people so that you get stuff before you die.

Now that's that first lesson there for the lawyer that he didn't get, but we have to get it. Loving your neighbor is not what you do to earn eternal life.

It's what you do to say thank you to the God who gives freely. What do you do when you know that God has shown mercy to you?

[24 : 55] If you believe that, you say thanks. Romans 12 1 says, in view of God's mercy, offer yourself as a living sacrifice. If there's no obedience in our lives, there's no compassion in our lives, there's no loving our neighbors, it's like we're saying to Jesus, you've done nothing for me.

Now that was the first big lesson there for us, and it came from that question, what I've got to do to inherit eternal life. The big lesson for us was we need to learn how to accept God's compassion.

Now there's another big question there remember as well. who is my neighbor? You remember that from verse 29. Now there's another big lesson that kind of matches up with this question.

And that big lesson for us is that we need to be compassionate. We need to love our neighbor. Let me explain that. Now we're learning this one from the Samaritan who was a neighbor to the man in the ditch.

Now the lawyer has asked the question, he's looking for a bare minimum, who is my neighbor? But Jesus gives him a different answer. Now a neighbor, we have to think of a neighbor as someone close by.

[26 : 10] But these days I think because we live in streets, which they didn't necessarily live in in the camp when Israel was in the desert, when they started thinking about this in Leviticus 19. Because we live in streets, we tend to think of our neighbors as the people on that same row.

And it kind of has the same meaning because they're the people who live close to us. But back in Leviticus 19, when we're talking about neighbors, we're talking about all the people who are close to us, not just the people who we share a fence with.

And we don't really think about this with our neighbors on our streets these days, but the force behind that word when the Bible uses neighbor is the person who is in your inner circle, the person who is in your in group, the people who are closest around you.

We certainly don't think that way about most of our neighbors these days. Now, it's a little bit like when we started school, the way that the Bible thinks about neighbors.

When you started school, you didn't kind of go around, well, at least this wasn't the case for me. I didn't go around and look at everyone and look through their bag and see if they had a pool and look at their dad's car and if it was fun to ride around with.

[27 : 24] I used to like arm rest in cars. It made me feel like I was in a spaceship. I didn't check out when my friends' dads had cars with armrests before I decided to be their friend. See, when you're in school, you rock up.

You don't know anybody. The first day you go to kindergarten or if you change schools when you go to high school, in year seven, that first day you don't know anyone. And so you're just praying that you get to sit next to someone at lunchtime and you're going to hold on to those people for the next six to twelve years and they're your friends.

And that becomes your group, the phenomenon of a group in school. That's how they're formed. They're just the people that you happen to be sitting next to that particular first day and they become your friends for the next six years.

Now that's kind of the way neighbours work in the Bible. They're the people that you're close to. They're the people that are around you in your everyday life and not necessarily because you just assess them upon how good friends they might be.

They're just the people who are nearby and so they become the people who are part of your inner circle of friends. The people that are with you, the people that you love and take care of and cherish.

[28 : 31] That's what we're thinking about when we're talking about neighbours in the Bible. And the lawyer is saying, listen, who is that for me? Who am I supposed to be taking care of? Who is in that inner circle for me?

Because really I just want to focus on them and forget about everybody else. Who is supposed to be my neighbour? Who I'm supposed to love? And you notice that Jesus changes the question a little bit towards the end of the parable.

Have a look down in verse 36. Now compare this to what the guy originally asked in verse 29. Who is my neighbour? By the time we get down to verse 36, Jesus says something a little bit different.

Which of these three, so the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan, do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell in the hands of robbers? Now we're not talking about who is my neighbour anymore.

Jesus has changed the question. Who are you going to be a neighbour to? Jesus isn't thinking about who's that select few people that have been close to you for a little while that you're going to think about loving and you're going to make sure you take care of them.

[29 : 44] He's blown it wide open and he's now saying, now who are you going to be a neighbour to? Who are you going to treat as if they are in your inner circle?

Who are you going to speak to just as if they were your closest? Who are you going to have compassion on just as if they were your closest friends?

Being a neighbour means treating people even enemies Samaritans as those people who are in your group click circle and amongst many things compassion is how we treat our closest friends, isn't it?

If we hear that our friend is sick or if there is massive tragedy in the family of one of our particularly close friends, we're prepared to drop stuff for that, aren't we? We're prepared to drop our business to be there for them, to let things that we're working on be late, to let them not get done because we're prepared to have compassion on them.

Now that's what we're talking about when Jesus says, who are you going to be a neighbour to? Who are you going to extend your closeness to?

[31 : 02] And we're not talking about everyone in the world being your closest friend with whom you share everything about you, but who are you going to extend the compassion that you would have on your closest people to?

Who are you going to be a neighbour to? Kate and I know a family very well actually, in which there's been a lot of strife.

Two brothers are involved. One brother was looking after a bunch of cash for missionaries and this guy decided that, well, to make some more money for these missionaries and really impress them and support them, I'm going to invest it in some really high-risk investments and he loses everything.

But he doesn't tell anybody because he doesn't get in trouble. So he looks for ways to get it back. He looks for other risky business ventures and business ventures are even riskier than that, to try and get this money back so no one will find out.

But someone does find out, the Sydney Morning Herald finds out on the front page and so it gets blown wide open. So this guy and his family get torn apart but his brother at that point has a choice, has to say normally in our society it would be understandable for me to disown this brother of mine, to say that he's not my brother anymore, that he's not part of this family anymore.

[32 : 31] That happens in society and no one seems to wave their finger at that, it's acceptable. He could do that. But instead he takes his brother and his brother's immediate family and he cares for them, he houses them, he has them over to be in his family and he calls this man still brother.

brother, he extends his compassion to someone who does not deserve it. That's the question Jesus asks, who are you a neighbour to?

Who do you extend your compassionate arms out to even though they don't deserve it? Now sometimes it is very hard to be compassionate, isn't it? It's strange but it's true.

It's strange because we kind of associate compassion with something, some tug of your heart that irresistibly pulls you towards somebody and you can't control it. That's compassion, it's an emotion. But it is hard because sometimes we feel alongside the tug of compassion, we feel the tug of busyness and inconvenience and not knowing quite how to help and well just greed and laziness.

Being compassionate is a hard thing a lot of the time. sometimes you need a bit of a nudge to get on and do hard things which strangely enough is why two young teenage guys recently wrote a book called Do Hard Things, great title.

[34 : 08] I don't know if you've read this book, has anyone read this book Do Hard Things? There you go, I can tell you whatever I like. I think it's a fair enough book, it came from a couple of teenage guys who looked around at their generation and said huh, you know we really don't do much apart from study and Playstation and then they looked around at society and they thought huh, you know society doesn't actually expect much of us apart from study and Playstation and maybe taking out the trash.

That might be an unfair caricature of you if you're a teenager so I really apologise. But they wrote a book to say hey let's pick some hard good things to do. Things that aren't just study, that aren't just recreation and that aren't just doing what our parents kind of asked us to do around the house.

Let's pick some big stuff. Let's pick some across the country stuff. Let's pick some stuff that's not getting done by anybody else and do it. And so they write this book to encourage young people and all the like to get on and do that kind of stuff.

Now if you ask me I think at certain times the book probably goes a little bit too far down the line of the best thing you can do with your life is just be productive. But apart from that they have one section kind of like a third of the book which is I think really good.

It's got some helpful stuff. It's called five kinds of hard things. Five kinds of hard things that there are in the world to do. They say there are hard things that take you outside your comfort zone.

[35 : 39] There are hard things that go beyond what's expected or required of you. there are hard things that are too big for you to do by yourself.

There are hard things that don't pay off immediately and there are also hard things that go against the crowd. So we've got outside of comfort zone, beyond what's expected, too big for you to do alone.

Excuse me. They don't pay off immediately and they go against the crowd. And obviously you've got a mix of those things and a lot of different things we look around and think are hard. Now do they sound familiar to you?

Because they sound familiar to me. Because they are five reasons why I'm not compassionate. Because sometimes showing compassion to someone who I see on the way from A to B, someone on the street, someone in a fight with somebody, you see these people and you think well it's just outside of my comfort zone.

I don't want to get involved in that. Sometimes I think well no one really expects me to do this, to help here, to give there, to give time somewhere else.

[36 : 51] No one expects me to do that so I can get away with not doing it. It's too big for me to do alone. I can't fix the problems of the Dalit caste in India, the untouchables, who it's an insult for their shadow to fall on other people in the country.

That's too big for me to fix by myself. So I won't worry about that. They don't pay off immediately. I won't even see the end of this problem before I die.

And they go against the crowd. You know how bad I'm going to look if I associate with this guy, if I break off from my friends to go over there and be with that woman.

now if those things do sound familiar to you as they do to me, then we need to remember the cross of Jesus.

We need to remember that that was hard. We need to remember how generous Jesus was to bleed away for us.

[37 : 59] we need to remember that when he was nailed to that cross, our sin and fear of being lowered in society and our selfishness and greed and unwillingness to be compassionate was nailed with him up there.

and we need to remember that when he came back to life, he gave us new life in his image, his perfect God loving image and he gives us the strength to go on being compassionate, being merciful and loving, to break those hard barriers of comfort zones and expectations and too big to do alone.

He breaks that. Now, time and time again, when I talk to people who don't know Jesus and I ask them what they think about Christianity, what they think about the church, time and time again, what surprises me and disappoints me is they can tell me a lot more about what the church is against than what it's for.

Now, let's break that, eh? Let's break that perception. Now, I know a lot of it is because the devil really doesn't want the world to realise that Jesus' people are his and are like him and will change the world on his behalf through his spirit.

But at the same time, let's not give people a reason to think that the church isn't for helping people, that the church isn't for going out of its way, that the church isn't really about being generous.

[39 : 55] Let's stop people from having that excuse to think that way. What's the last verse in the passage that was read out to us?

Go and do likewise. Why don't we pray? Our Lord Jesus, when we look at your life and your death and your resurrection, we're blown away by the generosity and the compassion that you've had on us.

And Lord, we praise you for the new life that we have in you and how through your spirit you are making us in your image. Lord, we pray that we might step out this week looking like you in how compassionate we are, in turning away from the temptations that we don't need to be compassionate and the fears of how difficult being compassionate is sometimes.

And Lord, we pray that as we reflect on the gospel of how you've saved us, that you would drive us out to live as people who love you with all of our heart and our soul and our mind and our strength and who love our neighbours.

Amen. Let's pray will pray 2 and pray 2 again.

[41 : 31] Thank you.