

Will you be a good Samaritan?

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[0 : 00] During the week.

Five years.

It was only five years. But it seemed more like 50.

Five extremely long years. Spent all alone. Out in the outback.

Are those lonely, isolated areas. Well away from the towns, villages, marketplaces and all such other places where people would gather.

[1 : 04] Remember? Because just over five years ago, this guy was a farmer. And he worked the lands.

He had a family. Wife, children, the lot. He was blessed. But, but, the only other people he had now encountered these last five years were those who were also branded with the same label as him.

Because five years earlier, he stood before an old-styled religious priest, a local community leader of the day, who covered his mouth and held out his hand and branded him unclean.

Thus ordering him to leave. Leave his work. Leave his home. Leave his wife.

Leave his children. To leave society as a whole. Live in the outback. Live in the outback. And most importantly, keep a massive distance from every single other person.

[2 : 27] Don't shake anyone's hand on the way out. Don't give your wife a hug. Nothing. Just go. Because it is indeed the first century. And he, of course, has leprosy.

And so, days became weeks. Weeks became months.

Months became years. Perhaps from a distance, he sees his children growing up. Becoming teenagers.

His wife doing the grocery run. His work colleagues tilling the land. Desperately dying just to be with them.

Perhaps from a distance, he saw busy, busy, busy crowds all around the marketplace. Buying, selling, dealing.

[3 : 29] And what he would give just to be in that scenario for one moment. What he would give for a little human interaction. What he would give to be bumped into in a busy crowd.

To have his toes stood on by rushing bypassers. What he would give to be at home with his friends laughing, chatting, dining.

Because for five long years, he hasn't even come close. He hasn't shared a joke.

Discussed the local news. Explored the latest fashion. Nothing. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. No one has come anywhere near even close to him.

He's in full isolation. And it's not like our COVID take. Where we were all nice from a distance. And we WhatsApp each other.

[4 : 32] Hug emojis and whatnot. No, no, no. It was very, very different. It was more like your filth. Get away. Stay away. And if he comes near, lift stones and chuck them away.

Very different form of isolation. It was loveless. And it was very, very unkind. And then.

And then. From a distance, again. He sees Jesus. He sees Jesus do mighty, miraculous stuff.

He hears Jesus' teachings. He sees Jesus' actions. He sees the kindness of Jesus.

And not just like these. Not just within these last five years of his life. But across his whole life. He has never seen such kindness. And then strikingly.

[5 : 43] And this is very, very, very strikingly. He sees other members of the outcast society. Maybe not diseased like him.

But still living lives. That society branded as immoral or evil. Perhaps these ones don't live isolated. But neither do they get accepted.

And those in high positions. Certainly stay away from them. And as I say strikingly. He, from a distance. Sees those ones.

Come to Jesus. The master. The king. The highest of positions. And that give away shout. Doesn't happen.

Jesus doesn't do it. He's watched those ones. In the middle. Not isolated. But not accepted. Be shooed away by Pharisees.

[6 : 41] And what not. All his five years. But now Jesus. And he's not shooing them away. In fact, even more. Jesus comes right to them.

Face to face. And they talk. And they eat together. They walk the mountains. They go fishing. Jesus heals them. Sets them free.

Restores. Forgives. Renews. As I say. It is strikingly new. And this guy.

Let's give him. Give him a name. Make it a bit more personal. Joe. Joe. Is at the end. Of his game. He is a man.

With nothing. To lose. And so in dire desperation. He begins to ponder. And begins to think. And begins to dream.

[7 : 37] What if. I do what the other outcast. People did. What if I also go up to Jesus. No, no, no, no.

No. They didn't have leprosy. I can't. I can't. And lying awake. He thinks. But. But he's so lovely. He's so kind.

He's so gentle. He's different than everyone else. He never. Turns anyone away. But the other side of his thoughts. Win. The argument. But they didn't have leprosy.

You're too much. You're not going near. Someone as clean. And as wonderful as Jesus. Case closed.

Or is it? Somewhere. Somehow. Whether through watching from a distance.

[8 : 36] Or hearing the story told to him by others. He hears Jesus. Share the story. We've just read.

Called the Good Samaritan. Or to put it into a bit of action. And Phil. This video. That gives a little bit more take. On it. Thanks Phil. Imagine a man lying on the side of the road.

Hurt and alone. While others simply pass by. Who would stop to help? In the days of Jesus. There was a busy road. That stretched from Jerusalem. It was a dangerous path.

Wondering. If Jesus might welcome him. Then. He seen all of Jesus' miracles. And he fought deeply. Would Jesus heal me?

Then he saw how lovely and kind Jesus is to all. And he dreamt about shaking Jesus' hand. Then he hears Jesus proclaim a Samaritan.

[9 : 41] As the kind, helpful hero in his story. And that's it. Bang. He is now fully convinced. Jesus will love him. Show him kindness.

And heal him. And so he has a plan. He's been keeping a close, watchful eye. On Jesus' movements. Jesus' teachings.

And today. Jesus is not too far from him. So after, say, five years, seven months, three days, two hours, four minutes. Of not interacting with anyone else.

Of no kind words spoken to him. Of no handshakes. He, with all the braveness, boldness and strength he can muster. Strays out over his boundary line.

Quietly making a line to Jesus. His path meets Jesus. The disciples shout, get back. Others lift the stones.

[10 : 41] Jesus smiles. He kindly smiles. Making the others calm down. Suddenly looking at the others.

Our Joe guy is fully aware of what he's just done. And of the state he is in. And so with a little backwards hesitation.

Instead of just saying, I love you Jesus. I've watched this. Please heal me. He ends up saying, Lord, if you're willing. You can make me clean. So easy to fall back.

Isn't it? We've all been there. Haven't we? We know what Jesus can do. We know he loves us. Yet in the heat of the moment, we doubt just a little and confound ourselves.

And well, if, if Jesus, if. This guy knew what Jesus could do. He was convinced inside. And Jesus could see that.

[11 : 41] Jesus could see his faith. And so in the greatest act of kindness this guy has ever received. Up until that point. The greatest act of kindness.

The Bible says, Jesus reached out his hand and touched him all. A comforting issue. Something like that. This alone was like all the colors of the rainbow. Every firework. Every joy. Every bit of happiness. All rolled into one. His mind exploded and filled with joy. For as he expected, Jesus didn't shoo away and keep the distance.

But like Jesus came over and got close and shook his hand. Greatest act of kindness. Jesus says, I am willing. Be clean. And the Bible says immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.

[12 : 40] Whole life is back on track. He ran and hugged his wife and his children purposely bumping. God had restored and healed him.

For Joe and many others, hearings might have been convincing messages for them in their day. But the power and the outcome of this passage is still as significant as it was back then.

And the ending message is deep there in the final words that the video showed that we watched. That Jesus is telling us to go and do likewise.

That everyone and anyone, no matter who they are, where they are from and so on, is our neighbor. And as much as we would anyone, we must be kind to all.

Jesus was extremely kind to all, including those society shunned. And kindness is the big characteristic here.

[13 : 47] The famous good Samaritan story. The teaching from the outset of the story is where kindness begins.

Because you see, from the outset, the legal expert, the one who prompted Jesus to tell his story, saw the wounded man in the story as nothing more than a topic for discussion.

He enters the scene looking to discuss. And that's all he does. He never shows any sign of moving from discussion to doing.

And so for as long as he remained in that frame of mind, kindness would never come out of him.

Likewise, the robbers from the word go saw him, this man, as an object to exploit.

The priest from first sight saw him as a problem to be avoided. The Levite from first approach sees him as an object of curiosity.

[15 : 00] In other words, all four of these characters get up each and every day and leave home with no intention of being kind.

Kindness is not on their mind. Kindness is not on their mind or on their radar. And so when they encounter a situation where kindness is needed, it's not there.

However, the Samaritan, he sees the man as a person created by God to be loved. The Samaritan gets up in the morning and leaves his home having chosen to be kind.

Kindness is on his radar as he leaves home in the mornings. And so when he sees a robbed man, he doesn't even have to linger to think, to ponder, to wonder.

The kindness in him just acts, just does, just helps. In this story, Jesus teaches that kindness begins by people choosing to live their lives as God-honoring disciples.

[16 : 19] Kindness starts by me and you choosing to get up each day and purposely make a conscientious decision to leave home and be kind to all.

In all circumstances. And most importantly, to be kind to everyone and anyone, no matter who they are or how society has branded them.

If you leave home in that mindset, then like the Samaritan, and more importantly, like Jesus, you won't have to consider or think or wonder.

You will just naturally be kind, again like Jesus. That's today's deep inner teaching of the Good Samaritan story. And one of the many, many things I love so much about Jesus is he's always, always willing to practice what he preaches.

He always practiced what he preached. Hence our Joe guy. Because for Jesus, his neighbor was whoever was in front of him at any given point.

[17 : 35] And on this particular day, it was our Joe guy. And so on that day, no questions, no wonders, no worries, no ifs and alms, just kindness.

Jesus taught, go and be a Good Samaritan. And then Jesus went and been a Good Samaritan himself. Leaving us with many, many perfect examples of how we can be Good Samaritans in our lives.

And so if you are a disciple of Jesus, then living like Jesus means you have kindness. And also living like Jesus means you are kind.

And you need to take note of the meaning of the Good Samaritan and take it very serious. If you are yet to decide to believe in Jesus, to be part of this worldwide movement of Christians, then there is one more little piece of this you should know.

Like all the outcasts of the first century, all of us here today have in some way or another messed up and lived in sin, whether it's just that small little lie right through to anything else.

[18 : 54] And because God is so clean, so good, so holy, he shouldn't really come anywhere near any of us.

But one more way to see the story of the Good Samaritan is that God is the Good Samaritan himself.

He does not care how far any of us have fallen, how far any of us have went, or what we've done, or what we've become. Because just like our Joe guy, if you come to him, he will absolutely reach right back out and bring you in.

Forgive you, restore you, help you, love you. And he says, just come. Jesus said, if you're weak, tired, sad, bad, evil, or whatever you think your label is, just come.

He'll take it. And he'll do something with it. Because he is strong and kind. Amen. We're going to do that song, Jesus Strong and Kind.

[20 : 08] I'll pray.