

# New Kilpatrick

Podcast

19th July 2020

Luke 10:25-37

## Welcome

Hello and thank you for the invitation to join you today, wherever you are. We are online, YouTube video, podcast and also on the phone so however you are joining us today, thank you for making the time.

Over the summer we take some of the well known stories we have been brought up with and look at them in a different way if we can. So let us journey now, from Jerusalem to Jericho and find ourselves beside someone beaten up on the roadside. Do we cross by and move on, or stoop down and help. Or are we the one who helps at all, but rather the one lying by the roadside.

Let us pause as we centre ourselves for worship.

## Centring

Holy God  
Holy and true  
may you hold our souls  
as we hold onto promise  
in these time  
and have eyes  
that see deep enough  
to find you  
among us  
within us  
between us

Holy God  
Holy and true  
in word and in silence  
may we hear  
what is ancient and new  
in the stories we tell  
and the silence we hold  
to hear  
deep enough  
to know your presence  
among us  
within us  
between us

Holy God  
Holy and true  
we gather  
in this moment  
in the echo of all who have done so before  
and centre ourselves  
in such a place  
deep enough  
to be held by you  
among us  
within us  
between us

So be it  
Amen

## Story Intro

We are a faith that tells stories. That is who we essentially are. We've tended to imagine we are about belief, the stories are used to illustrate the doctrine. But the stories come first. The stories are alive and we hear them again and again, and each time, we are invited to hear them in a new way; reframe them that they may interpret, and give meaning, and challenge us where we are in whatever time and circumstance we find ourselves.

The Good Samaritan is a story we've frozen in time in many ways, taken the big 'love your neighbour' meaning out of it. And rightly so. It doesn't get much bigger and more important than that. Jesus himself stays so. Love God, love neighbour are the two pillars of faith, and the holy two.

But love neighbour is huge. The story is far from the cartoon, children's bible version we still have in our heads. We tell it today in a world that isolates again and is returning to lockdown in many countries. Where many are hungry, poor, isolated before covid, and where domestic violence and unemployment have beaten so many, who is it who becomes the Good Samaritan today, and who chooses to walk by on the other side.

Here's a retelling by Jeanette:

## Story

The lawyer stood up, his question ready to be asked, even though he knew the answer. Confidently he asked, "Teacher, what must I do to experience the Kingdom of God?" "What does the law say? What do you find written in the books of the law?" the teacher enquired.

“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,” the lawyer answered confidently knowing he followed the law to the letter.

“You are correct. Keep doing this and you will live,” the teacher replied as he tried to continue his other conversation.

But this was not enough for the lawyer as he pushed a little further, “But who is my neighbour?”

A man was travelling home on foot after missing the last bus home. This was not a good area to be in, especially when travelling alone. He tried to look invisible. He had no option but to go this way, as going another road would take far too long to get back. His phone had run out of charge and he only had a handful of change in his pocket.

Up ahead of him, a large group were blocking his path. He crossed the road and tried to avoid eye contact, fearful for what would happen. It was too late. Before he knew it, he was set upon. A stranger in the wrong part of town. Pushed to the ground, possessions taken, he was left injured, battered, and bruised on the ground. Too afraid to cry out in case there was worse to come.

He lay still. Waiting for help. The group moved on. In the distance he saw someone coming, he thought it was a person from the church and believed he would help. The person saw him but crossed over the road, averting his eyes. He was late for an important church meeting and could not stop. It was too dangerous.

Some time later, another person came by. The man thought he saw a bible in a bag. He called out but they too crossed over – too worried that it was just a ploy to get them to stop. The man wept. Just then, he realised someone was in front of him, wearing similar clothes to the people who had robbed him. He closed his eyes and expected the worse. It never came. The man gave him some water to drink, sat him up, gave him his jacket, and called an ambulance. When the ambulance came, he gave the man some money, and his name and address. “If you need anything just call,” he said.

The teacher turned to the lawyer, “Who was the neighbour to the injured man?”

“The one who helped him,” the lawyer answered humbly.

“Go and do likewise.”

## **Reflection**

There is a lot more here than just being good to a neighbour. It's a story with so many nuances which we miss because we are not hearing it in the culture of those who originally heard it.

We've said this before, but it is always worth saying it again: who do you imagine yourself in the story? Stories invite us into them and to be one of the characters: who is the one you identify with?

Most, today, imagine being the Samaritan. Not the original hearers, for whom the Samaritan was anathema, epitomising the very idea of your enemy. The original hearers would clearly identify with the one who was beaten up and left by the roadside, the peasant, as they themselves were peasants. They knew what it was like to be beaten up, physically, often, but emotionally and politically too.

So the meaning of the story turns, and the viewpoint shifts from people with power and wealth, those with the ability to choose to be nice, but from the viewpoint of the victim. Remember this is the gospel. It is written from the viewpoint of the victim not the powerful. So hear this story from the victims viewpoint.

So instead of a moral tale about responding to your neighbours' needs, the deeper meaning is a challenge to love, not just your neighbour but your enemy because here, it is your enemy that ultimately saves you.

Jesus wants followers to see the world from the bottom up, and know, not only what it is like to give help to someone, but also what it is like to need and receive that help - help given by someone who is your enemy.

Do you see what that does, being open to the possibility of receiving help from our most disliked rivals? This humbles us, brings us down from the perch of power where we laud our help over the least. Such humility gives worth to those we see as not worthy. We need each other, even those we consider our enemies. That is quite a different ethic from the version of the Good Samaritan we have been brought up with.

But the Samaritan was not a random choice of character. Jesus, just before telling this story, had himself been rejected by the Samaritans. He himself has just been on the receiving end of the prejudice, the enemy's wrath. He had sent messengers to find hospitality for him in a village in Samaria on his way to Jerusalem but the villagers refused to offer him hospitality because of the direction of his journey. Jesus had little reason to see a Samaritan as a hero of hospitality. This is not a random children's story but a parable that reframes how we live in the world in order to transform it.

It is also a story that tells us loving our neighbour challenges our traditions and institutions. The priest and the levite were doing exactly as their tradition dictated. These rules had evolved over generations. Now Jesus was saying, these traditions are no longer a priority.

There's no way we can reflect on the characters of those who passed by. But they were religious folk doing what their tradition said, traditions designed to help people cope with the world, with chaos, with uncertainty. That's what rules and traditions do: anchors for us to hold on to.

But he clearly demotes those things if they separate us from each other's needs. It's a story that tells us, the world actually is chaotic but the thing that will save us is love, for both neighbour and enemy.

It is a very familiar parable but reframing it in the original context, perhaps offers a fresh retelling, a new hearing so necessary for our time.

## Poem

Bound up  
in the regulations of their traditions  
of what they are allowed  
and not allowed to do  
lest they become unclean

the religious leaders  
walked on by  
leaving the beaten up  
by the roadside  
assylum-side  
wrong side

and perhaps the more honest of them  
questioning their bound-up religion

along with the beaten up  
whom they have left  
for someone else  
to welcome

both  
wonder

what does love look like?

## Prayer

Lord, teach us to silence our own hearts and minds that we may listen for your voice and feel your presence in the depths of our being.

Loving God, we came here to be in your presence, to open our hearts and minds to listen for your words.

Your created world and everything in it are made with love. All have a purpose, a place. You knew us before we were born. You know our thinking, you know us. As in all days,

you are in the beauty of the earth, the colours of the flowers, the sound of the wildlife, the laughter of children, the wind rustling through the trees in the breeze.

Loving God, we often take what we have been provided with for granted. We seem to forget nothing lasts for ever if it is used, abused, broken, and discarded. We can value material things over simple pleasures, over the love and care of one another.

We can put ourselves first above neighbour, our needs above theirs, take rather than give. We judge and exclude, and are quick to anger instead of offering, and asking for, forgiveness. Lord God, we get it wrong. Forgive us. Transform us and renew us in your love. Your love, open to all. Today, tomorrow and every day so we recognise you in our neighbour whoever they may be.

And now we pray together, as one body of Christ, the words he taught his disciples, The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever.  
Amen

## **Benediction**

Go  
as a neighbour  
to love all who pass by

And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ  
the Love of God  
and the common wealth of the Holy Spirit be with us all  
Evermore