

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Deacon Jacqueline Esama-John. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church - pray for them as they pray for you.

Introduction

Today is the 5th Sunday of Pentecost. It is also listed in the lectionary as the 4th Sunday after Trinity. We thank God for the gift of a brand-new day, for the warmth of the summer sun, for all creatures great and small, and for nature's fruitfulness.

Today we will be reflecting on the story of the good Samaritan. It is a beautiful story that challenges us to love God, neighbour, and ourselves.

Call to worship

Loving God we come before you as your beloved children.
We come before you as those who know our need of your strength

As those who know our need of your mercy;

As those who know our need of your love.

We come before you as those who long to know your presence deep within us.

As those who long to undertake the daunting yet privileged task of the Good Samaritan and we pray for your blessing in Jesus' name. **Amen**

(Adapted from Roots Adult & ALL Age)

Opening Hymn- Hymns & Psalms 232- Tell me the old, old story

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here.

<https://youtu.be/XqSIMQaeAds>

Verse 1

Tell me the old, old story
of unseen things above,
of Jesus and his glory,
of Jesus and his love.

Tell me the story simply,
as to a little child,
for I am weak and weary,
and helpless and defiled.

Refrain: Tell me the old, old story, tell me the old, old story,

tell me the old, old story, of Jesus and his love

Verse 2

Tell me the story slowly,
that I may take it in,
that wonderful redemption,
God's remedy for sin.
tell me the story often,
for I forget so soon;
the early dew of morning
has passed away at noon.

Refrain:

Verse 3

Tell me the story softly,
with earnest tones and grave;
remember I'm the sinner
whom Jesus came to save.
Tell me the story always,
if you would really be,
in any time of trouble,
a comforter to me.

Refrain:

Verse 4

Tell me the same old story
when you have cause to fear
that this world's empty glory
is costing me too dear.

Yes, and when that world's glory
is dawning on my soul,
tell me the old, old story:
"Christ Jesus makes thee whole."

Refrain:

Katherine Hankey (1834-1911)

Prayer of Adoration and Thanksgiving.

Let us pray.

Creator God, we give you thanks for new life in the summer,
for the beautiful sunshine, flowers, and birds, for bright new
green leaves. We thank you for Jesus of Nazareth, living the
truth of God, bringing good news to the poor, freedom for the
oppressed and for all down the ages who have lived Jesus'
story.

We thank you for the history of God's people, the defiance of
the prophet, the wisdom of the teacher, the self-emptying of
the servant. We thank you for the prompting of God's spirit,
for the stories that shape us, the communities of faith that
sustain us and share our joys and pain.

We give you thanks for all God's people, on earth and in
heaven. For those who have gone before and those who walk

alongside us now. And for all who work and sing and pray for the coming of God's kingdom. Thank you, Father son and Holy spirit for being with us, right now and every day. Amen.

(Adapted from Roots Adult & ALL Age)

Prayer of confession: –

Compassionate God, we have not always heeded to the command to 'love the Lord with all our hearts and our minds and our neighbour as ourselves'

We are sorry for our sins. Forgive us when we are not so confident about how we will inherit eternal life; when we miss those opportunities to serve the needy. Help us when we are overwhelmed by the demands of others, when we are resentful of our responsibilities to others. Help us to please you by the way we live, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Silence

Absolution....

God is love
and forgives our sins through Jesus.

Thanks be to God. Amen

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 30: 9-14 New International Version

⁹Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors, ¹⁰if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

The Offer of Life or Death

¹¹Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. ¹²It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹³Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹⁴No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

2nd Reading: Luke 10: 25-37 -New International Version

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ He answered, ““Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’^[a]; and, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’^[b]”

²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road,

and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii^[c] and 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.’

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Time to reflect

I thought I was going to have an easy ride with this familiar parable of Jesus, set in the lectionary readings for today. I’d read the story of The Good Samaritan so many times and I was

expecting to spend less time preparing a sermon for this 10th day of July 2022. How wrong was I!

I found myself thinking about how I could enable you to hear something new from such a familiar gospel passage and it does feel like an answer to prayer to have drawn my inspiration from our opening hymn;

“Tell me the old old story of Jesus and his love.

Tell me the story slowly, That I may take it in—

That wonderful redemption, God’s remedy for sin;

Tell me the story softly, with earnest tones and grave.

Remember I’m the sinner Whom Jesus came to save;”

Indeed what Comfort, what hope and love! What child of God could ever be tired of hearing this truly amazing story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection?

Telling stories is one of the most powerful means of teaching basic truths. Stories convey a lot of history and values that unite people. Stories prompt us to engage with our communities and cultures enable people to have a sense of belonging. I am a regular listener of BBC radio 4 ‘Book at Bedtime’, which is broadcast on BBC Radio 4 each weekday evening. I always enjoy the collection of short stories which are evocative, engaging, and influential. They are a beacon of light and they always feed my soul.

And so, it is in my thinking and reflecting on the concept of telling stories that challenged me to think deeply about the stories that Jesus himself told. You just have to read through the gospel passages, and you will see what I mean....“Let me tell you a story” Jesus says –“There was once a rich king who gave a great dinner and invited many guests” or “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field”, or, “There was a man who had two sons...” and so on and so forth.). Jesus *taught* using *parables* which are in effect simple stories intended to impart a spiritual lesson.

Why is Jesus so identified with this teaching style? In Mark’s gospel for example, we are told that “He did not say anything to them without using a parable” (Mark 4:34). It is as if there are some truths so profound that only a story can describe them, so personal and transformational that only a story will convey the message.

And so it is that we have a typical example today of Jesus’ passion for telling stories. According to our gospel passage, Jesus had a conversation with a lawyer (verses 29-37), who is supposedly an expert in the Law of Moses and who wanted to know if Jesus will use the Torah (the book of the law or first five books of the Bible) to answer the all-important question: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus recognises the lawyer’s expertise and asks him what is at the heart of the law.

He draws out of him the answer to his own question. Unsurprisingly, the lawyer summarises the Jewish Scriptures with the famous verse about loving God and loving your neighbour found in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. The lawyer paraphrases and conflates these laws into ‘*you shall love the lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with your mind; and your neighbour as yourself*’. The love that is to be offered to God is all consuming, all that can be given by a person. It is this same kind of love that we are asked to show our neighbour. The lawyer then went on to ask Jesus about the identity of his neighbour, and the answer that Jesus gives in the parable of the Good Samaritan is focused instead on who acts as a neighbour. This is a wonderful redemptive story. It is a story that answered the lawyer's initial question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" The question asked, assumes that it is the expert who has something to offer. However, the answer Jesus gives turns this assumption on its head. Jesus asks him to see what he can learn about love or about receiving kindness and care from someone different, someone like a Samaritan who in Jesus' day were viewed with suspicion and looked down on. It should be noted that in Jesus' day, no Samaritans were “Good” Samaritans. They were seen as bad people. Their religion and morals were questionable. So, no one would have anticipated the possibility of a Samaritan, ‘the bad one’ coming to the aid of the wounded traveller. In the parable, the Samaritan is

commended for going out of his way to show practical love to an injured man. Here was a man who “*fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.*”³¹ *But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity....”* We could say that a wreck was given back his dignity. The Samaritan not only cleaned this man's wounds but lifted him and transported him to the safety of an inn where he tended him further. By doing so he gave the man his life back.

The tension that is illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan is one that is before and within us every day. Jesus' teaching and actions demonstrate just how hard human beings can find it to keep the balance between loving God, loving neighbour, and loving self.

It is interesting that next week's lectionary readings (Luke 10: 38-42) point us to this truth. In that story, Martha is busy trying to show practical care for others. However, she is encouraged to copy her sister Mary, in sitting at Jesus' feet. I do wonder if holding both these stories in our minds might help us to understand better what it means to love God with all our hearts, and to love our neighbours as ourselves? Some people might argue that it is easier to give than to receive and that it is more comfortable to be the good neighbour than the one who needs help.

In the wake of the soaring cost-of-living crisis, it seemed especially important for us to be talking about loving our neighbour as ourselves. It is a command, and we must obey it. Our Old Testament reading in Deuteronomy highlights this truth- “what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. ¹² It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” ¹³ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” ¹⁴ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.” (Deut 30: 11-14)

The parable of the Good Samaritan is surely about an individual and the choices he made in obeying and living out the command to love God and neighbour. I have been propelled to think about those choices that we make collectively as God's people. It is encouraging to know that since the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic in 2020, lots of community groups have emerged. Neighbours who never spoke are now engaging in conversations both physically and via social media platforms. People are more accommodating and hospitable. Churches have seen a massive increase in the number of people who access their services

online, we have seen the compassionate responses to the Ukrainians following Putin's war in their country.

Here in the Enfield circuit, we have been blessed with the ministry and leadership of our Superintendent minister, Rev Dan Haylett who has faithfully stirred and enabled us to be the ‘Good Samaritan’ in our various churches and communities through our individual and communal actions. I feel a little bit sad that this very day in fact, we will be saying goodbye to Dan at the farewell service to be held this afternoon- nevertheless, such is the nature of itinerant ministry in the Methodist Church and however hard it is, ministers should be released to go and do the next thing that God might be calling them to. We have been fortunate that throughout the pandemic, Dan has given us a positive example of what it means to serve God and God's people well, in his endorsement of the opening of food hubs, food pantries, Messy church, the refurbishment of church halls and roofs, the Space building project, and latterly the opening of a Ukrainian refugee hub in the circuit. Not to talk about pastoral care and “otherness” Thank you, Rev Dan, for being alongside us and helping us to embody Jesus' way of compassion, reconciliation, and transformation.

And so, the focus for us today is not on how we feel but on how we act. When Jesus says for example in Matthew 7: 12 "do unto others as you would have them do to you" he is not

merely offering a capacity to have the same emotion for the other as we do for ourselves. He is inviting us to demonstrate the same care for others such as we do for ourselves. Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan compels us to examine ourselves, our congregations, our lives, and our life together, and while we are all affected by the cost-of-living crisis and worrying about having enough of anything, I would challenge you to allow yourself to be shaped by the question of "what it means to have eternal life". If you do, then your "doing" might just begin to reflect on your "being". You will combine both the attributes of Martha and Mary and be enabled to demonstrate the act of neighbourliness, the need to love God, to love others and to take proper care of yourself.

It was the liberation theologian S O Abogurin who said in the African Journal of Biblical Studies that "In the parable of the Good Samaritan, ethnic and social standing are no guarantee of right standing before God". He attests that this parable relates to the kingdom of God by demonstrating what it means to fulfil the ethic of law which is summed up in the command to love God and one's neighbour. 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'^[a]; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"(Luke 10: 27)– To do that, attention needs to be given not only to the state of the mind but also to the essential

differences which make up identity: ethnicity, social status, religion, colour, sex, culture etc and to the humankind's existential situation. God's love transcends boundaries of geography, race, religion, socio-economic status and even convenience.

The story of the Good Samaritan has inspired both religious and non-religious people across the globe to engage in acts of benevolence and compassion. In the eyes of the world, every Samaritan is a "Good Samaritan" So many organisations have adopted the name "Samaritan". I am sure you have heard of the charity 'The Samaritans' here in England. It is a charity that provides emotional support for anyone in distress struggling to cope or at risk of suicide. There was even a hospital in London called the Samaritan hospital for women and children.

From my own experience, both of growing up in colonial Africa and living in the diaspora, the parable of The Good Samaritan as with many of the other parables of Jesus are consequential in my generation and calls us to love and be compassionate to our fellow human beings and care for those less fortunate than ourselves.

I started my reflection on the thinking behind Jesus's stories. I can't help but wonder if the point of Jesus's stories was not

only to hasten God's reign of Justice and peace but also to change us? - Hope for transformation is embodied in the Samaritan's act of love and neighbourliness but perhaps what is important is the difference that love for neighbour and self will make: for he encourages the lawyer to 'go and do likewise'. So, my dear brothers and sisters, I will finish with those very words of Jesus "Go and do likewise" Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

God of love,

We lift up the world in our prayers and ask your blessing on all who are suffering today-those caught up in natural disasters, those engulfed in war and acts of terrorism. That they will find refuge and dignity.

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Lift up those who are bowed down by debt and poverty, those who are affected adversely by the cost-of-living crisis. That their needs will be met.

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Lift up those struggling under the weight of broken relationships.... That they may find healing and forgiveness.

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Lift up those bearing the burden of pain and illness, those suffering from cancer, COVID and long COVID, heart disease, and all other diseases and illnesses. We pray for increased wisdom and strength for all medical personnel. We pray for healing and wholeness all around.

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Lift up those whose hearts are heavy with grief- whatever the circumstances. We pray for comfort and peace. We remember the departed and pray for the repose of their souls.

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

We hold silence and pray for anyone known personally to us.....(pause)

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

We pray for ourselves, Lift us up, Loving God, shine your light through us and use us in your service, today and every day.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

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 trespasses.
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation.
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Closing Hymn – Hymns & Psalms 776- Make me a channel of your peace

Sing/ read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://youtu.be/g8eorCEMIK4>

Verse 1

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is hatred let me bring your love
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord
And where there's doubt, true faith in you

Refrain

Oh, master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul

Verse 2

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness ever joy

Refrain

Oh, master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul

Verse 3

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
In giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we're born to eternal life

Benediction

Go in the light of Jesus.
Stretch out your hands in friendship
Lift up your hands in praise,
Put your hands together in prayer.
Be a good Samaritan and offer a helping hand to all in need.
We go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen

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