

## SERVICE OF WORSHIP

### Care For Our Neighbours

Let us worship God, let us pray:

Lord God Almighty, as we come before your presence now give us quietness of spirit, humility of mind and eager expectation that you will meet us and speak to us.

Almighty Father, you wield power beyond our imagining, yet we need not fear. You made the vastness of the universe yet hold each one of us in love and for safety in the hollow of your hand.

Make this day a new beginning for us. Reveal your glory beside which all else seems dross. Speak your word beside which all else must fall silent. Give us your Spirit so that we may be cleansed and renewed and rededicated to your service through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

### HYMN

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

*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*

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

*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*

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

Sebastian Temple (1928–1997)

## SCRIPTURE READING

**Luke 10:25-37** (New Revised Standard Version)

### **The Parable of the Good Samaritan**

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 27 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 neighbour as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." 29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

## MESSAGE

It's possible that when Jesus told the Parable of the Good Samaritan he had just climbed up the road from Jericho to Jerusalem. You see, he's in Bethany when the next incident in Luke's Gospel occurs and Bethany is on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho. It would therefore be very natural for Jesus to use the Jerusalem to Jericho road in his story if he'd just walked along it and if his hearers were familiar with it.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho plunges over 1,097 metres in the course of some 27 kilometres, from Jerusalem 701 metres above sea level down to the Jordan Valley 396 metres below sea level. It was a desolate road and very dangerous to travel along, passing through the gorge of the Wadi Kelt (also spelled Qelt or Qilt) with its numerous caves which were the perfect hiding places for bandits. The 'road' was more of a winding trail or footpath (there's actually a hymn which includes the refrain 'On the Jericho road, there's room for just two') and was so dangerous for travellers that, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, it was known as 'The Bloody Way'. People being beaten and robbed on the road was a regular occurrence. So, Jesus' story does not describe an unusual event. It is, however, a great parable which probes the root of human relations.

The parable begins with a man; any man. Not a particularly important or wealthy man. Just a man in distress. Some brutal, callous, desperate men beat him and rob him of his money and clothes. He's left for dead on the side of the road. He certainly will die if help doesn't reach him soon.

A priest and a Levite- professional religious men- do nothing to help the injured man. Seeing him lying there, they pass by on the other side. Their sacred books told them how important kindness was. They were responsible for Temple worship in Jerusalem. The Psalms they sang in Temple services extolled the compassion and mercy of God. So why didn't they show compassion and mercy to the half-dead man on the side of the road? Why did they pass by on the other side?

They may have been frightened that the robbers were still around and could attack them. This is understandable. They may have feared that the man was already dead. If he was, and if they touched him, they would become ritualistically impure (Leviticus 21:1). This would mean, according to the Jewish religious law, that they could not take part in the worship of the Temple for a period. If this fear motivated their inaction, then it means that, in effect, they put religious rules before compassion and kindness. In doing this they were wrong and Jesus uses them as examples of how not to behave.

However, before we are too quick to condemn them, let's stop and think; do we always practice our religion properly? How often have we done the same as them: been conscious of people in need and yet pretended they weren't there? Have we crossed the road and walked by on the other side?

Now, of course, there is more need, more suffering in our communities than we can deal with as individuals, but not being able to do everything does not mean that we should do nothing. We can all do something for our fellow citizens. If we don't, we cannot criticise the priest or the Levite.

We all like to think we would be like the Samaritan in the story. He is the hero; the one to emulate. He stopped and rendered 'first aid' to the beaten man. But more than this, he took the man to an inn and paid the innkeeper to look after him. He would pay anything else owing at his next visit. Therefore, the Samaritan went further than ordinary quick help. He saw the job through.

When we think of the word 'Samaritan' it's a title of nobility. One who shows compassion and love and concern. When Church of England Vicar Chad Varah founded in 1953 an organisation that would be there to help people in desperate need, the name he chose was 'Samaritans'.

There was a great enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans. Jesus made the hero of one of his parables a man from a people who were despised by the Jews! By doing this Jesus is saying race, class, colour don't matter. Doing the right thing is what matters. Helping those in need.

Jewish law stated that a Jew should love his neighbour as himself (Leviticus 19:18), but it is clear from the context that 'neighbour' meant another Jew. Jesus, however, says 'no' to this. He says it shouldn't mean Jew, it shouldn't even mean Gentile. Instead, Jesus tells his Jewish listeners that 'neighbour' means everyone, even those who are disliked, such as the Samaritans.

Let's think about what Jesus said to the lawyer who had asked him how he could inherit eternal life: *36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?* *37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy."* Jesus said to him, **"Go and do likewise"**.

This instruction- go and do likewise- is for all of us. In the words of John Mansfield in 'The Everlasting Mercy':

*"I knew that Christ had given me birth  
To brother all the souls on earth"*

There are thousands and thousands of people and families within our community and country who are suffering during the coronavirus pandemic. Many of them have lost their jobs, or are desperately missing seeing family members, or are suffering mental health issues, or domestic abuse. The list of issues and problems people are facing is vast in number. We need to think about them and remember them in our prayers. But not only is our nation suffering, so is the whole world. At times like this we need to think of the people of the earth as our neighbours. Humanity made in the image of God. We have come to the end of Christian Aid week. The principle behind Christian Aid is to provide help and support to those abroad who are in need.

The love of Jesus is universal. It knows no limits of race, colour or creed. It is our business to continue this philosophy. We cannot- must not- decide whether a person is a neighbour according to criteria such as their religion or nationality. A neighbour is anyone in need.

*"E'en so, who loves the Lord aright,  
No soul of man can worthless find;  
All will be precious in his sight,  
Since Christ on all hath shined:"* (John Keble)

In his book 'This I believe', Elmore McKee writes the following: *"I see my neighbour in a special light. For the Creator is trying to do the same kind of business within him as within me. So I have learned to knock on doors expectantly....I had a friend who constantly gave expression to this instinct, the late, colourful, gentle, human vicar of St Martin's, Trafalgar Square, London, Dick Shepherd. I found he had a curious habit, whenever he left a hotel room, of praying for the next person who would occupy the room, that he might make a better go of things in life than he himself had. He saw humanity in a special light, as bound together in and under God"*.

The Samaritan in the parable doesn't have a title or even a name. He's just an ordinary man from Samaria in Northern Israel, who happened to be travelling one day along the dangerous road between Jerusalem and Jericho, saw a man in need and helped him. It is the Christian Church which has given him the title 'good'- the Good Samaritan- because of what he did.

*"Go and do likewise"* Jesus says to us. If we listen and obey, we will be fulfilling our Christian duty and we will certainly be helping to make a better world for everyone.

Amen.

## PRAYER

Loving God, we bring before you our community, country and whole world in so much pain, so much need and sorrow and concern. We know that you care for this world so much that you willingly gave your all for it, living and dying amongst us in and through your Son, Jesus Christ.

At the close of another Christian Aid week we are so aware that we are very fortunate- we have enough food in our stomachs, supplies of fresh water and a roof over our heads, we have access to medicine and can keep in contact with people by letter, phone or internet. When we think about it we realise how fortunate we are and we definitely count our blessings.

We pray for the millions in this country and abroad who are less fortunate than we are, those for whom hunger is a constant problem, who can only dream of having a home, those who are forced to drink filthy water and who have no access to doctors or essential medicine, those who suffer because of war and conflict and also natural disasters.

We realise that alone we cannot change the world, and yet we also believe that for you nothing is impossible. Therefore, teach us to remember all who are in need, in our prayers but also in our actions, and in this way, together, we can make a difference. May you bless the work of Christian Aid and all charities, organisations and individuals who are helping people at home and abroad.

Loving God, help us to learn from the Parable of the Good Samaritan- to be ready to offer help to those who are in need, to practice what we preach, to strive towards the fulfilment of our prayers through the things we say and do and the kind of people we are.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Our Father, who art in heaven....*

## HYMN

1 **Beauty for brokenness,**  
hope for despair,  
Lord, in Your suffering world  
this is our prayer.  
Bread for the children,  
justice, joy, peace,  
sunrise to sunset,  
Your kingdom increase!

2 Shelter for fragile lives,  
cures for their ills,  
work for the craftsmen,  
trade for their skills;  
land for the dispossessed,  
rights for the weak,  
voices to plead the cause  
of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor,  
friend of the weak,  
give us compassion we pray:  
melt our cold hearts,  
let tears fall like rain;  
come, change our love  
from a spark to a flame*

3 Refuge from cruel wars,  
havens from fear,  
cities for sanctuary,  
freedoms to share.  
Peace to the killing-fields,  
scorched earth to green,  
Christ for the bitterness,  
His cross for the pain.

4 Rest for the ravaged earth,  
oceans and streams  
plundered and poisoned -  
our future, our dreams.  
Lord, end our madness,  
carelessness, greed;  
make us content with  
the things that we need.

*God of the poor ...*

5 Lighten our darkness,  
breathe on this flame  
until Your justice  
burns brightly again;  
until the nations  
learn of Your ways,  
seek Your salvation  
and bring You their praise.

*God of the poor . . .*

Graham Kendrick

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## BLESSING

May God fill us all with joy and peace because we trust in him,  
so that we may have abundant hope in the name of Christ  
and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.