

Year C 5th Sunday after Pentecost, July 10 2022, Pastor DJK

“Who Is My Neighbour?” – Luke 10:25-37: The Good Samaritan

Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said go and do likewise.

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

A perfectly reasonable question for you and me.

But it was a lawyer who asked the question?

Is it a loaded question?

It says he wanted to “test” Jesus.

Is Jesus going to dig a hole for himself when he answers the lawyer?

I went to a lawyer once – first and last time.

I wasn't sure if I could afford him so I asked upfront how much it was going to cost.

He said it will cost \$1200 dollars for every three questions.

Wow! I said, that's a bit steep isn't it?

*He said, yes it's a bit steep but it's the way it is - now what's your **third** question?*

Anyway, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus answers the question with a question – as he often does: He asks the lawyer, “What is written in the Old Testament, the law?”

The lawyer knows his stuff backwards: “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 love neighbour as yourself.”

Perfect answer, Jesus says. “Do this, and you will have eternal life.”

All pretty simple but the lawyer is worried, “who exactly *is* my neighbour?”

We know who our neighbours are don't we? Some of us have loveable neighbours – some of us have not so lovable neighbours.

But I think we all know God's law about neighbours is more not just about the person next door.

I think the lawyer is asking what we all want to know – “who isn't my neighbour?”

In other words, who don't I have to love.

Who do I have to love?

Who in jail, who on refugee boats, who starving, who living in fear can I forget about – because they're technically not my neighbour.

Where is the line in the sand Jesus?

Jesus tells the story we know so well.

A **Jewish** man was going shopping and was attacked by robbers – He was bashed up real bad and left to die on the side of the road.

Along comes a **Priest and a Levite**, both trained in God's law and know all about compassion.

They see the bashed-up man and pass by on the other side of the road.

Along comes a **Samaritan** man, a traditional enemy of the Jewish people – and he helps the Jewish man.

It's the **Samaritan** man who patches up the **Jewish** man and takes him to hospital and makes sure he gets the best treatment by paying for his treatment in advance.

Jesus asks the lawyer who was the neighbour to this bashed up man? The answer is too obvious. "It was the **Samaritan man**" the lawyer says.

Jesus says, "go and do likewise". End of story.

Or is it?

This is a shocking story for Jewish people - it's completely upside down.

It would make sense if the Priest and the Levite, fully trained in compassion, helped their fellow Jewish brother – and became the heroes, the saviours.

It's not like that.

It's embarrassing, for the Jewish audience to hear that their heroes just walked by.

So very embarrassing that they try and justify the Priest and Levites.

"This road to Jericho is a dangerous road".

"It goes from Jerusalem in the desert, high altitude, to Jericho along down the Jordan, lots of food and produce".

“You go down to Jericho to shop – when you shop you have money – you’re a target for robbers”.

“So, it’s a dangerous road; the priest and Levite are important people – it could be a trap – they could get bashed up themselves.”

Another obvious excuse for their lack of compassion is that the bashed up man was bleeding.

In their world blood makes a person ritually “unclean” and therefore unable to do their duties as priests and leaders.

They almost make the Priest and the Levite to be responsible heroes for ignoring the bashed man?

Are the Priest and the Levite the real heroes of this story?

Hey, what if Jesus really twisted the story?

What if the bashed-up man was Samaritan?

And the Priest and the Levite stopped and helped.

Wow, super heroes, going against the law, and tradition, and all the ingrained social rules to show compassion – compassion to a Samaritan!

The Priest and the Levite heroes of compassion.

And Jesus could say, “go and do likewise” – perfect!

As perfect as it might be – Jesus makes the least likely person to be the hero – the lowest of the low – the Samaritan.

It’s the Samaritan who sees the whole person laying there, he sees he’s got no money, he’s got broken bones, he’s been traumatised.

It all there in the Greek. The Greek, word for traumatised, is traumatised.

He puts the man on his donkey.

He stays with the man all night in hospital.

He pays all the expenses.

Who was the neighbour to this man – off course it’s the Samaritan.

Like all parables this is for us.

The lawyer had every right to ask “who is my neighbour” – so he could restrict his compassion to exactly those he was legally obliged to.

In Greek, Hebrew, and English a neighbour is someone next to you – either living, or working, next to you or with you – it is quite defined – exactly what the lawyer wanted to know.

But Jesus answer is different isn't it?

EVERYONE is our neighbour.

There are no lines in the sand

Our enemy is our neighbour.

The social outcast is our neighbour.

The naked, the lonely, the hungry, the stranger, the LBGTO, even the lawyer and parking inspector, they are all our neighbour.

As John says: Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 1 John 4:20

To love God is to love our neighbour, as we love ourselves – and that's a lot.

Jesus makes the Samaritan the hero of the story.

He flips the social order upside down.

A neighbour is an equal.

A neighbour is someone created in God's image, fearfully and wonderfully made just as we are.

A neighbour is a person Jesus died for.

To love God is to love our neighbour, as we love ourselves – and that is a lot.

Lord, give us eyes to see our neighbour, ears to hear our neighbour, hands to help our neighbour, and hearts to love them as we love ourselves. Amen.