Questions on the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10vv25-37)

**GETTING STARTED**

1. How familiar are you with this particular parable? How would you sum up its essential message? How much of an impact upon your life and faith has this parable been up to now?

**GOING A BIT DEEPER**

1. What impression do you get of the man who came up to Jesus on this occasion? Look at verses like v25, 27, 28 and 29, and try to build up an identikit picture of him……
2. How do you think he would have liked Jesus to define who our neighbour is?
3. How broadly does Jesus define the concept of ‘neighbour love’ in the story he tells in vv 30-36?
4. When Jesus tells the lawyer to ‘Go and do likewise’ in v37, what does Jesus want the lawyer to realise, and do?

**GOING PERSONAL**

1. How do you fare given this charge to see people in need as your neighbour?
2. Has ‘the penny dropped’ for you yet, and has your pride been punctured by this story?
3. Have you come to see Jesus as the Greatest of all Samaritans, and do you come to him regularly as your Samaritan?
4. If , as many of us will be, we are those who’ve repented of our loveless-ness, and turned in faith to Jesus, have we yet embraced the new commandment Jesus gives to his followers to ‘Go and do likewise’ in the power of the Holy Spirit?

**TURNING TO PRAYER**

1. Why not share perhaps any fresh insights you’ve gained on this parable today, and then turn them into prayer for one another….
2. How about praying for any friends you have who are (like the lawyer) unaware of the depth of their lack of true love, and pray that they might come to God for mercy…..
3. How about praying for the Church of today, all over the world, that it might be inspired by the grace and power and love of Jesus to display that extreme love to a watching world, to the glory of God…..

**‘Parable of the Good Samaritan’**

Luke 10v25-37

**All Age slot**

All of us – young and old- love hearing a good story!

And Jesus was the greatest story teller of all times, and Lesley has just read us one of the most famous stories Jesus ever told (Cartoon Image of Jesus as a story teller, with bible reference below).

It was about a man who was in deep trouble…..

He’d been beaten up by robbers (image of man beaten up on side of road) and left to die on the side of the road to Jericho

**Who** then was going to help him out?

First up a priest came down the road, but when he saw the man,(Image of person looking at injured man) he did nothing to help him….

Next down the road was a Levite, someone who worked in the Temple. He saw the man, and – like the priest – decided not to help. He walked by on the other side of the road [Image of man walking by]

Last up was a man from Samaria. He was the very last person in the world you might expect to help a Jew in trouble because Samaritans tended to hate Jews, and Jews Samaritans.

And yet THIS Samaritan decided to help this unknown man [image of Samaritan tending to injured man’s wounds] . He washed his wounds, took him to a place of safety on his donkey, and paid for his care…..

Jesus says that WE are to be like this Samaritan to people we come across who need a helping hand…

We are to (Speech bubble ‘Show kindness to **all** in need’

Images around screen

* Primary school kid in tears. Middle aged woman
* Ukranian mum and kids Person looking distressed on a phone

Speech bubble - ‘Go and do likewise’

*[Prayer]*

**Sermon (for 1130)**

I’m sure that the parable of the Good Samaritan was familiar to many of us (cartoon image of Jesus as storyteller with the Bible reference under it)

It tells us of a man in deep trouble. He was on a journey from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was mugged by people who beat him up, took his possessions, even his clothes, from him and left him half dead.

Two religious figures – a priest and then a Levite- people you might expect to help a fellow Jew in distress - saw him, but did nothing for him, passing by on the other side of the road.

Then we hear about a man who we might expect to care very little for a Jew in need, for this man was a Samaritan, and the mutual hatred between Jew and Samaritan had lasted for centuries.

BUT this Samaritan was an exceptional man. He came to the injured man’s aid, binding his wounds, putting him on his donkey, and taking him to a place of safety where he could continue to recuperate. He even pays for the man’s care, and offers to pay for any ongoing care.

Here’s how a Flemish painter Jacob Jordaens imagined the scene as the Good Samaritan took the injured man to the inn [Painting by Jacob Jordaens]

So, it’s an inspiring story for sure, but what did Jesus hope that it would produce in his hearers, then and now?

Many think that the main point comes in Jesus’ final words [Speech bubble- ‘Go and do likewise’] Jesus wants to encourage us to be good citizens- looking out to help others in need rather than just looking after ourselves. The late Queen often used to refer to it in her Christmas messages to the Commonwealth encouraging us to have eyes wide open to serve others, here at home and overseas. It is an urgent, powerful message to a world where few are willing to love this sacrificially…

But I want us to go a **bit deeper** into this parable, because I believe that Jesus had at least 3 aims in telling it that might not be immediately obvious to us, and yet are important if we are truly to benefit from it

The first aim of Jesus was (1) To puncture human pride .

Jesus knew that we humans can often have pretty big egos. We are told by companies how amazing we are, and we swallow that flattery ‘hook, line and sinker’ because we want to believe it!

We think we can do what we like, and we can even please God by the way we live.

Well Jesus wants through this parable to put a pin into the balloon of our ego (image of a balloon) and show us how limited we are in our capacity to do even the most basic of duties, of loving God and other people as we should. He inserts this pin NOT because he’s a sadist who enjoys causing pain, But because he knows that if it’s only when the bubble of our pride is deflated (image of pricked balloon) that we will be willing to humble ourselves before God, to throw ourselves on his mercy, and allow him to transform us by his power.

I think that this aim of Jesus becomes clear as we look carefully at the man whose question prompted the parable.

He’s described as an ‘expert in the law’ – not criminal or contract or land law- but the law of God, and he comes to Jesus NOT as a humble seeker, but (v26) to **test** Jesus, to put him through his paces to see if he passes the scrutiny of this expert.

The question this guy asks shows that he’s interested in eternal life, and that’s a very good thing indeed. But look carefully at his question:- ‘What must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Surely that shows immediately a flaw in his thinking for he SHOULD have realised that there’s nothing we humans can DO to obtain eternal life. We are far too impure for that- we can only receive ‘eternal life’ as a gift, not earn it.

But Jesus is a very wise pastor. He wants to make this guy realise this himself rather than just rebuking him for his arrogance. ‘So’ he asks him ‘Ok, you want eternal life, what answer does God’s law give to your question?’

‘Ah’, says the man- ‘I know that one- I’ve got to love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and I’ve got to love my neighbour as myself’

‘Quite right’, says Jesus – ‘10/10 for that answer. 😊 Do this and you will live (v26)’

But far from satisfying the man, Jesus’ answer seems to unsettle him, for perhaps he realises that he hasn’t always lived loving all others and putting their needs above his own….

‘So’, he asks Jesus ‘**Who** is my neighbour?’

* Is it the person who lives next door to me?
* Is it my fellow Jews?
* Is it those of my fellow Jews who live a good life.
* Or does neighbour include all sorts of other people as well?

We can surely see what the guy is trying to do…..

~ If the concept of neighbour is very **narrow**, then he can feel secure, because he has tried to love such people;

~ If a neighbour includes a **much broader** group of people, then he realises that he’s in deep trouble, because he hasn’t thought about them much yet, let alone loving them…

Can you see how the parable answers the man’s question?

My neighbour is anyone in need who I can help.

He or she may not share my faith, indeed their people and mine might be sworn enemies as the Jews and Samaritans were.

But **if** they are in need, and I am in a position to help them, they are my neighbour, and the law of God requires me to love them as myself…..

Jesus is wanting this intelligent man to feel the force of this parable, and to stop looking for praise from Jesus as to what a superb human being he is, but rather to fall to his knees and beg God for mercy for the many times he’d failed to love others in need as he should have done.

Jesus’ first aim in telling this story was to puncture the pride of his questioner, because he knows that unless that happens, he is going to continue travelling rather smugly through life thinking how wonderful he is, rather than realising his need for God’s grace and power.

As this parable is told today, 2000 years later, Jesus still has the **same** aim- to puncture that pride can so easily lurk in our hearts- a pride that makes us feel we have treated God and others as we should, and so we can be confident of eternal life

‘*Oh, no you can’t’* says Jesus- ‘for you and I tend to define our ‘neighbours’ just as narrowly as the man in this parable. We don’t love others as you should, and that’s before we even start thinking about our love for God…. Do you love him with ALL you heart, soul, mind and strength? With all your being? Really?

The only safe way to approach God is not like the child winning a prize at a school assembly! It is on our knees, calling out to him for his mercy.

But Jesus DOESN’T want to stop there, with us on our knees. He has a 2nd aim in his story and it’s to (2) Point us to THE good Samaritan

The medieval Church loved to read into this parable lots of meanings, some of which are more likely than others.

But one thing they got absolutely right is to recognise that the Samaritan in Jesus’ parable pointed forward to , and was fulfilled in, Jesus himself….

* **He** was on a journey that would soon end in Jerusalem;
* **He** would not just expose himself to the risk of violence, as he helped others, but would soon he killed for the sake of others;
* **He** would bring not just comfort and healing to broken bodies; he would deal deal with the ravages of sin and death, and bring forgiveness, restoration and eternal life to troubled souls.

I’m sure that the Jesus who had just sent his disciples on this urgent message to call people to be ready for Jesus, and to receive him willingly and gladly, would have wanted **the same** for this rather smug and condescending man….

Jesus had come down from Heaven for **all**- that included this man before him.

It includes **you and me** today-

* Jesus wants all of us not simply to leave with the balloon of our pride burst.
* He wants us to receive from him the blessings of peace with God, a peace that starts now and will continue for all eternity, a peace made possible through the work of Jesus, the greatest of all Samaritans

Today might be an excellent day then for us to say a hearty ‘thank you, Jesus’ that he set his face resolutely to Jerusalem for our sakes, to revel in our relationship with him, if that’s already began, or to receive it for the first time. That’s what I’m sure Jesus would want for us, even as he wanted it for this man who was known as an expert in God’s law, but hadn’t really ‘got off the starting blocks’ in terms of eternal life yet…

Then there’s a 3rd aim I’m sure Jesus had for this wonderful story, and it’s that it might (3) Propel us outwards in love.

We mustn’t miss the final words of the passage in v37. Jesus says to this man that he is ‘**to go and do likewise’**. Like the Samaritan in the parable, we are to display a radically different sort of love to others…..

This love will be seen in the way we treat **our fellow Christians** , of course, even those we don’t feel particularly close to. People very soon began to notice the supernatural love that bound Christian brothers and sisters together…

But that love didn’t stop there. It **extended** to people who don’t share our faith, our background, our values. It is a love that is to be extended to all we encounter in need.

**How** can we show this love to others?

It is because of the miracle that happens when we turn to Jesus, the Good Samaritan- God pours out his love into our hearts so that we CAN begin to love others, as God loves them

Maybe this little diagram might be a good summary of why Jesus told this parable

It points us backwards (arrow left, with word repentance) as we acknowledge our many failures to live lives of love;

It points us upwards (arrow up with words gratitude and faith) as we thank Jesus for coming to be our Samaritan and we put our trust in him;

It points us forwards (arrow right with words ‘Spirit inspired love’), as we willingly give ourselves to lives of love in the power of the Spirit…

May the Lord Jesus continue to use this parable in our lives today…

[Prayer]