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Athelstone Uniting Church #72

14 July 2019

Text: Luke 10:25-37 NIV

Let's pray

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.

Amen.



Figure 1 Ferdinand Hodler. *The Good Samaritan*. 1885

Last week I shared some thoughts with you about evangelism.

And I played a video which was produced by the Methodist Church in the UK.

To refresh your memory, I am going to read to you some of what the video said about *Evangelism*:

Here's the good news:

you don't need a qualification and there is no exam to pass,

... a uniform is not required

... and you do not need to know all the answers.

Quite simply, it's about passing on a message:

a message you've already heard.

Here's the good news;

... love, compassion, forgiveness, hope

... Jesus.

It's his story, it's your story, it's our story –

... what already is and what is yet to come.

It's one size fits all –

... no small print (no qualifying conditions)

... and it changes everything.

Here's the good news:

it spreads easily;

it's not complicated. You'll find it in the ordinary, extra-ordinary and the unexpected.

... It passes through your conversations

and echoes in your generosity.

Friends see it when you're available.

... Strangers, they notice the difference.

There is no formula, no perfect way to do it.

It's about passing on a message ...

... and quite simply, you're it.

Here's the good news.

Tell somebody, show somebody, be somebody. ¹

Evangelism

The focus for today is "Be Somebody"

... love, compassion, forgiveness, hope

... Jesus.

... It passes through your conversations

and echoes in your generosity.

¹ Methodist Church <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/4551/dd-exploring-evangelism-tell-show-be-script-with-notes-0912.pdf>

Friends see it when you're available.

... Strangers, they notice the difference.

Tell somebody, show somebody, *be somebody*.

I'm going to invite Nola back – to tell us a story

Nola to tell a story about a lady who needed help

Thank you Nola!

A wonderful example of being "Being Somebody. Being a Neighbour to someone in need"

Good Samaritan

So let's look now at the story Jesus told, which has been named the Good Samaritan

Artwork

I chose this artwork on the screen today for you to reflect on.

It is Ferdinand Hodler's interpretation of Jesus' parable. Hodler was a Swiss artist from the 19th century. He painted this in 1885.

He shows us just how far past the limits of custom and comfort we are called to go in showing mercy. It's quite moving – taking us close into that dusty road where a man lay dying.²

The parable

The reading began with an expert in the law testing Jesus – 'what must I do to inherit eternal life', he asked

Jesus cleverly replied with a question – 'what does the Law say'?

The lawyer replied by quoting Sheh-mah – a daily prayer that Jews still pray twice daily today

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; (from Deuteronomy 6)

Then he added

and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'" (from Levitus 19)

Jesus affirmed him:

² <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/culture/art/the-good-samaritan>

you have answered correctly – do this and you will live

Do this – love God and love your neighbour!

The lawyer hadn't finished yet – he wanted to find a loophole so he pushed Jesus further:

Just how would you define neighbour? (MSG)

In other words, what boundaries are there? Whom is it okay not to love?

Give me some parameters, he said to Jesus, whom might it be okay *not* to love? After all, I'm only human...just give me a list of which people I have to take care of, and who's on the outside of that line I need to draw around my "community of care."

What is the easy, clear way?³

And Jesus replied with this well-known parable

First of all, we have the setting – a downhill road from Jerusalem to Jericho

Known to be dangerous - a road to be avoided

Jesus doesn't give us any information about who the man was – just that he was going down this road.

He is attacked, beaten, robbed and left there, dying.

He could be anyone – he could be one of us.

He's in the wrong place at the wrong time and now in a lot of trouble.

A priest, then a Levite, pass him by on the other side of the road.

It sounds harsh and uncaring but as law abiding Jews, they would have become ritually unclean if they had contact with a body of unknown origin and there was still a high risk that the robbers would be still around, ready to mug someone else. So they passed by.

³ Kathryn Matthews. Weekly Seeds https://www.ucc.org/weekly_seeds_compassionate_neighbors

Picture the original listeners to the story – that Luke was writing to

In those days, it was commonplace for a story to begin this way, "a priest and a Levite came by,"

just as we might begin a story, a doctor, a lawyer and a priest walked into the bar -and the listeners would have expected to hear that the next person was an ordinary Israelite..

.that was the usual third person in that trio: a priest, a Levite, and an Israelite.⁴

and of course the Israelite would be the favoured one by those listening and would save the day.

But Jesus substituted the Israelite for a Samaritan.

A Samaritan!?

[Samaritans](#)

Let me tell you about Samaritans:

Jews and Samaritans did not get along

At that time, the land of Samaria was situated between the regions of Galilee in the north and Judea in the south.

Hundreds of years previously, after the death of King Solomon in 975 BCE, the nation of Israel split into north and south. The northern tribes of Israel were collectively called Israel, and their capital city was Samaria. The southern tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Simeon were collectively called Judah, and their capital city was Jerusalem.

Over the centuries, the two nations were influenced by various conquerors and the Samaritans in particular, developed their own form of Judaism. They believed in Yahweh (God's name) but they worshipped at Mt Gerizim instead of Jerusalem. The Samaritans had adapted their own worship practices, and they had their own version of Torah.

The Jews regarded the Samaritans as ignorant, superstitious, mongrels, outside of God's favour, and they would not associate with them.

[The Samaritan took pity](#)

Back to the story, along comes a Samaritan..

A Samaritan!?

⁴ Stephen Patterson. The God of Jesus: The Historical Jesus and the Search for Meaning

This was a most unexpected and unwelcome hero. It's not one of their own kind who saves the day--it's the enemy, the hated Samaritan, a guy who's definitely on the outside of their community of care.

There's no way a Samaritan should be the hero of this story.

The Samaritan had probably been taught, from his side, to hate the Jews, too. And he's in their territory, and the robbers could still be hanging around, waiting for their next victim.⁵

Yet, it was the Samaritan who took pity, who was moved with compassion. Risking his own life he came close, he touched the man, he tended to his wounds, he lifted him onto his donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. He then did the equivalent of leaving his credit card with the innkeeper to cover any expenses incurred.

Not only did this Samaritan help the man, he did so with extraordinary kindness and generosity.

When Jesus asked the lawyer

Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?"⁶

The lawyer replied

"The one who had mercy on him⁷ - the one who treated him kindly⁸,"

The lawyer couldn't even bring himself to say "the Samaritan"

And Jesus said, "Go and do the same."

Go and do the same

Nola's story

Earlier, we heard Nola and Dean's story of compassion

Dean took pity on this woman

And together they made a gracious offer

Allowing this woman and her child to live in their backyard. In their caravan

⁵ Kathryn Matthews. Weekly Seeds https://www.ucc.org/weekly_seeds_compassionate_neighbors

⁶ Luke 10:36 MSG

⁷ Luke 10:37 NIV

⁸ Luke 10:37 MSG

To share their resources

Open ended - several months

Extraordinary

That is being a neighbour!

They had mercy on this woman and treated her with great kindness

Be somebody

Actions that speak louder than words.

As St Francis of Assisi may have said:

“Preach the Gospel, if necessary use words”.

This is what I mean by “Being Somebody” – embodying Jesus’ love and compassion in our responses and our actions.

What better way to share the good news of Christ’s love for all?

Receiving kindness

The parable also challenges us to consider the question, ‘Who is my neighbour?’ in a different way:

Imagine yourself as the one who was travelling along the dangerous road that day

What would it be like to be completely vulnerable, and to receive kindness from someone so unexpected? someone we would not normally associate with.. someone we struggle to accept or understand..

What if you were to find yourself in a situation where you were left helpless and found a neighbour reaching out to you in kindness?

A neighbour who is Homeless

A neighbour who is addicted to ice

A neighbour who is Muslim

A neighbour who is a politician

A neighbour who is in a bkie gang

A neighbour who is.. ?

To be somebody

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a story of grace:

God's wide-reaching grace

Jesus' answer to the lawyer, was that there are no boundaries for whom to show God's love and grace.

To be a good neighbour is to extend that love and grace to the whole world

The lawyer was interested in boundaries – finding the limit of his responsibility to love and care

Jesus was trying to help him understand that it was not about the *limits of his responsibility* but about *the extent of his opportunity*.

And so it is for us⁹

To Be Somebody

As a good neighbour, we are challenged to notice, to be kind, to be generous, to go above and beyond to show compassion and mercy

As a good neighbour, we are challenged to embody the good news of Christ's saving love

And

To Be Somebody

We are challenged to receive kindness from a good neighbour that God sends to reach out to us

Are we willing to receive grace from those that society turns their back on?

Are we willing to receive grace from those 'the church' may have frowned upon in the past?

Are we willing to receive grace from the least expected?

Here's the good news

Here's the good news:

... love, compassion, forgiveness, hope

⁹ Steve Godfrey in Abingdon creative preaching annual 2016. P137

... Jesus.

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