

It's easy to raise barriers as to who is qualified for our caring and Jesus warned his disciples against restricting their hospitality to only those who could return it.

I can imagine the audience as they listened to Jesus that day wandering who was coming around the corner next.... it's clear Jesus was working his way down the social ladder, so may be the next person would be the shop keeper....

Surprise..." it's not the shop keeper...it's your worst enemy.... it's that half-breed dog, the lowest of the low that if you talk to, everyone's gonna know and reject you too.

But here we are at the crux of the story and of the 3 truths Jesus wants us to hear.

That;

Eternal Life is an inheritance of God reserved for those who love him, but don't be deceived we cannot say we love God if we refuse to show mercy to people.

That;

Our love for one another truly reveals our love for God, that to show mercy and be a neighbour to the needy is the expression of that love.

That;

We must be a neighbour to anyone in need and don't determine people as neighbours and non-neighbours based on their race or behaviour because God created everyone in his own image.

Loving others will make us heirs of eternal life, but it's not the reason why we show mercy, Compassion is.

If eternal life is the sole purpose for showing mercy then we are only doing what the lawyer wanted to do...

The Priest and the Levite counted the risk, the Samaritan didn't.

Sometimes treating people as our neighbour means leaving our comfort zones, shifting our priorities and doing what Jesus would do.

Mercy is always costly somewhere because everything in our society comes with a price.

In this wonderful story Jesus shows that we cannot hate another human being and claim we love God for in doing so we are simply deceiving ourselves and heading for destruction. Jesus' final statement "Go, and do likewise" challenges us to make a personal assessment of our attitudes and actions toward humanity, and a decision as to what we will do about it.

But one thing is certain, the story of the Good Samaritan confronts us to make a decision.... Are we, or are we not, going to love our neighbour as our self?

Jesus said "Freely you have received, freely give..."

His was the first 'Pay it forward' ...and we are challenged to do the same.

**St Mary's Sanderstead - Trinity 4 14.7.19 'Pay it Forward' - Loving your neighbour as yourself
John 10:25-37 Fr. Grant Cohen**

It was approximately 3:20am on March 13, 1964, when twenty-eight-year-old Kitty Genovese was returning home. She parked her car, turned-off the lights and started to walk to her second-floor apartment some 35 yards away.

She got as far as a streetlight when a man grabbed her. She screamed and lights went on in the building nearby. "Oh, my God, he stabbed me! Please help me!" Windows opened a man's voice shouted, "Let that girl alone."

The attacker just looked up, shrugged and walked-off down the street and Kitty struggled to get to her feet lights went back off in the apartments.

The attacker then came back and stabbed her again. And again, because she has cried out "I'm dying" the lights came on and windows opened in the nearby flats. The man got into his car and drove away.

Kitty staggered to her feet as a bus drove by and it was now 3:35 am, but the attacker returned again and finding her in a doorway at the foot of the stairs he stabbed her a third time. It was 3:50 when the police received the first call. They responded quickly and within two minutes were at the scene, but kitty was already dead...

I tell you that story because kitty could have been saved, 3 times. Somebody had heard her plight but did nothing....

What do we do when we see brokenness and injustice?

When I was a curate, I had an old blue fiesta, it had done a lot of miles with me driving back and forth from Manchester to Portsmouth and the day came when I knew its life was coming to an end. One of the couples in the church asked me to go round to see them one day and asked me what my car was worth...I asked them why and they said because we want to give you Ruth's car...which was only a few years old and only had 13,000 miles on the clock...Whatever your car is worth is the amount we will take for Ruth's car...and so I got a 3-year-old car for £600, which Ruth also gave me back when I left. "What do I owe you for that?" I guess we've all said that phrase...

Today's culture is driven by the idea that everything that happens around us must be paid for, that if someone does something for us, we look for a way to pay them back.

Maybe it's because we don't like the thought of being indebted to anybody for anything.

In the film "Pay It Forward," a twelve-year-old, takes an assignment which is to come up with a way in which to improve the world.

His concept was simple, that Instead of living life trying to pay people back, he would begin to pay people forward.

And so he began to do random acts of service for people and when they tried to pay him back, he would tell them to return the favour to three more people. He figured that if every day he did just three kind things and those three individuals did three kind things the next day, that in two weeks, over 4.5 million people would have been impacted.

I wonder what the world would look like if we all did it...

Paying it forward didn't originate with that film it started with Jesus.

As Jesus developed his earthly ministry, the religious authorities became increasingly hostile toward him. They considered his teaching contradicted their interpretation of the Law of Moses and they deemed him a real threat to their authority....and they resented him even more because he associated with people who they despised and rejected.

And so one day along comes a lawyer....

It's not the first time that someone has tried to trip Jesus up and it certainly won't be the last, we don't know the motive of why this fellow came but are told his question. On which most human being at some point asks.

"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What must I do in order to go to heaven" is how we might put it.....

It's an interesting question.... interesting because it actually contradicts the very heart of Jesus' teaching. Nevertheless, Jesus asks him "What does it say in the law" and out of more than 600 commands in the law of Moses, the lawyer says;

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbour as yourself." His reply clearly meets Jesus' approval because he tells him "You have answered correctly, do this and you will live". But Jesus knows that keeping both of these is impossible, in fact even his question about inheriting eternal life is isn't valid, since an inheritance is something you receive because you have had a relationship with someone; it's given to you not earned.

So maybe in the back of his mind the lawyer knows that he's failed because he asks;

"And who is my neighbour?"

By the time of Jesus, the feud between Jews and Samaritans is almost 750 years old and the reason why Samaritans were despised goes back to when the Assyrians conquered Israel

While most of the Israelites were taken into captivity some remained and so when Gentiles resettled the land bringing with them their pagan idols the remaining Jews began to worship them alongside the God of Israel.

Intermarriages took place and the Samaritans were the descendants of those unions.

In Jewish culture, it was only a fellow Jew who was considered a neighbour so if someone wasn't Jewish you didn't need to worry about them, but It's interesting that in the story, the Samaritan is stripped and unconscious. The normal way people are identified is twofold: by dress and by accent or language. But since this man could neither talk or be identified by what he was wearing, he is reduced to simply being a human being in need and this is precisely what Jesus wants us to hear....

So the first person to come by the scene was a Priest. His office required him to remain ritually pure and the fact that he was travelling to Jerusalem meant that he was on either on his way to serve his two-week slot in the temple, or on his way back home. We know that if a priest came in contact with a Samaritan, a Gentile, or a dead person, he would be considered ritually defiled and wouldn't be able to fulfil his priestly duties without going through some rigorous purification ritual. But the fact that he can't recognise if this person is his neighbour or not means he simply walks on by....so is the priest doing anything wrong?

Then comes along our next character.....

Levites weren't as important as priests; they had less money and less prestige and the consequences of touching someone who might be unclean is less strict, but nevertheless he too walks by...

Maybe he's afraid that the same will happen to him that the thieves like the murderer in my opening story are still lurking, maybe he doesn't want to get involved after all he might have a family, its late, he has other priorities. Maybe he's seen the priest walk by and thinks 'well what's good enough for him is good enough for me...' - A good loophole of 'Well if they didn't why should I' The priest and the Levite could possibly justify their lack of real love and concern by saying that it could have been dangerous for them to do so -

They could argue that it would be unbiblical for them to stop and help. They could justify their neglect of the man because their interpretation of the law of love put them under no obligation to those outside their own race and religion.

But Jesus law of love calls us to act differently...

I've lost count the amount of times I've heard the expression "Charity begins at home" what does that mean?

Except, why should I give to those outside of my own....

The Jews of Jesus' time were very racist and sexist, they were God's children and his chosen ones and that was true but was it legitimate to be selective as to who benefits from expressions of their love and now ours?