**Sermon 31/7/22**

**The characters of the Parable of the Good Samaritan.**

Didn’t Chloe do a great job of reading?! Thanks Chloe!

What a great story! We love Andrew McDonough’s Lost Sheep stories, and for many more of his stories just google the Lost Sheep! That’s my plug…

The Good Samaritan. Such a well-known story. A favourite in Sunday School, but also a familiar term outside of church. If you were to go up to someone in the street and ask them if they’ve heard of the Good Samaritan they’d probably say, of course, my aunty is a good Samaritan; she’s always going out of her way to help people. Right?

You’ll even find the good Samaritan in the dictionary-

The **Merriam Webster** dictionary defines it as:

one who voluntarily renders aid to another in distress although under no duty to do so.

**Britannica** says it’s -

a person who helps other people and especially strangers when they have trouble.

The **Cambridge English** dictionary simply says it’s;

someone who helps people in trouble.

And my personal favourite, from the **Grammarist** says:

A **good Samaritan** is a person who does good deeds out of compassion and not because of any hope of reward.

So what is the story of the good Samaritan about? Well, you wouldn’t be wrong if you said it shows us how we should care for people, but it’s so much more than that. It’s a parable of Jesus, so of course it is! Have you ever noticed that when Jesus tells a parable he answers a question, but he deals with an attitude? He answers a question, but he deals with an attitude.

So let’s see first of all who the **characters** are. Can you remember them? Call them out! Who are the characters in the story?

1. Expert of the law
2. Jesus
3. The man who was robbed- victim
4. Pharisee
5. Levite- temple worker
6. The Good Samaritan
7. The Inn Keeper

Well done! So, let’s read the story from its source, the bible.

**The Parable of the Good Samaritan**

**25**On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

**26**“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

**27**He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2010%3A25-37&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25391a)]; and, ‘Love your neighbour as **yourself.’[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2010%3A25-37&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25391b)**]”**

**28**“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

**29**But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

**30**In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him **half dead**. **31**A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. **32**So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33**But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, **he took pity on him**. **34He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35The next day he took out two denarii[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2010%3A25-37&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25399c)**] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’**

**36**“Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

**37**The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10: 25-37)

Let’s pray before we go any further-

Heavenly Father, thank you for your word, the bible. Thank you for giving it to us to encourage us and to show us how you created us to live, and to teach us about you. Father, open the minds of our hearts today and reveal yourself to us, we pray. Challenge us. Help us to let go of what we think we know and come before you expecting to hear something new. In Jesus name, Amen.

Alrighty. let’s look at some of these characters in this story. We begin with

**The Expert of the Law, the man who started the discussion.**

Well with a title like that he must’ve been a smart cookie! And he would’ve been. He would’ve dedicated his life to studying scripture. And the passage tells us he wanted to test Jesus. I wonder what he really thought of Jesus. Was he thinking he’s just a nobody getting too big for his boots? Did the expert want to bring Jesus down a peg or two? Or was he just showing off?

What did he ask Jesus? “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

 When I first read this, I thought “how arrogant.” It sounded so selfish, like saying “what’s in it for me”. How do I inherit eternal life?

As an expert, he would’ve understood from the Law, the Torah, the first 5 books of the bible, that God created the universe and it was perfect, everything was in right relationship to Him and to one another, humanity stuffed that up, and we became separated from our creator, and frustrated with one another, so our heavenly Father then gave us a structure, a process, that if we live by his instruction, our relationship with God will be restored.

This is our eternal life. Restoration of our relationship with God, the Father and with all of creation. This is what we inherit.

 So, maybe he was just being a smarty-pants… Or maybe he thought he could earn his way to eternal life. Maybe he thought if he worked hard enough at the right things, he would be entitled to eternal life with the Father? But we don’t earn our way to God. Do we?

Now the second character in the story, **Jesus.**

Don’t you love Jesus’ calm demeanour when he answers him? Like a good teacher, he answers his question with a question.

**26**“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

And the expert quotes scripture from both Deuteronomy and Leviticus, which does indeed summarise what God asks of us.

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2010%3A25-37&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25391a)]; and, ‘Love your neighbour as **yourself.’[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2010%3A25-37&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25391b)**]”**

And Jesus responds, “you have answered correctly, do this and you will live”.

And I can almost imagine Jesus turning to walk away, thinking he’s answered the man’s question, but the man persists, “wanting to justify himself:” it says.

So, he then asks Jesus, “and who is my neighbour?”

Right at this point I’m thinking “Mate, quit while your ahead!”

So, we’ve got the **Expert of the Law**, and now we’ve got **Jesus**, who we, of course, now know to be the Son of God, God’s promised one, sent to provide the way for us to be reunited with God, and ALL of creation, once and for all. In fact, we now know he was really God Himself in human form.

So then, to answer this new question, Jesus tells a story. We all relate so well to stories, don’t we? We warm to story tellers. When someone tells a story well, we feel connected. A really good author will have you feeling like you’re the hero in his story, right?

So, Jesus begins this story “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho…”

Now instantly, Jesus has connected with his audience. This is a familiar journey, a familiar road. It’s a dangerous route, its name means “the way of blood” but Jerusalem, where the temple is, is on a hill, to go from Jerusalem to Jericho is going down the hill, from the temple to home. And this is relevant because of the priest and the Levite, but I’m getting ahead of myself.

**Back to the story**… so a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers, they stripped him of his clothes, and beat him, leaving him half dead.

Now when we’re listening to a story, we assume, unless we’re told otherwise, that the characters of the story are like us, so because Jesus never named the man, the expert likely assumed the man that was attacked was like him, a Jew…

Then, **a priest** comes along, sees the man on the ground and passes by on the other side. Now we could be tempted to think, well that was mean, why wouldn’t he help? Remember, he was coming away from the temple, down the hill, from Jerusalem to Jericho. So, it wasn’t like he was on his way to work and didn’t have time or was too busy. He can’t even say, “Huh, what if the man’s dead? I can’t touch a dead mans’ body that would make me unclean, so unacceptable to God, so unable to serve God in the temple.” Again, because he was on his way home from the temple, down the hill.

But let’s not be too hasty to judge. Think about how easy it is to find excuses not to do things we don’t really want to…It’s not hard is it? If we’re honest, we do it all the time…

Anyhow, back to the story, who’s next? **The Levite** also sees the man and passes by on the other side. Also works at the temple, also, therefore on his way home…same goes…no real reason not to help. In fact, they both have more of a reason to help. They’ve just been at the temple, presumably to worship God, which is to love God, so their hearts would be more than ready to show compassion…unless… perhaps… their hearts weren’t in the worship at all…perhaps they were just going through the motions…another easy trap to fall into…

Who’s next, ah, finally, someone who cares. A **Samaritan.** Wait, what? A Samaritan? Surely not. Jews had despised Samaritans for centuries. The Samaritans were initially part of the 12 tribes of Israel, and after being conquered by Assyria, many married into the people who took over their land. These people worshipped other gods, brought in their idols. When Israel was given back some of their land, the Samaritans stayed, and a great divide grew between them and Israel.

It’s an interesting concept. How often do we fall out with people that are actually similar to us? I’m thinking Scotland and England, East and West, Port and Crows…. everybody knows west is best. I’m leaving Port and Crows alone!

But there’s more, is Jesus saying a Samaritan can inherit eternal life? Surely if a Samaritan can inherit eternal life, anybody can? I mean, a Samaritan is worthless, less than human, according to the Jews.

Yes! Yes! Yes! Jesus is saying that. It doesn’t matter where you come from, what your story is, what you’re history is, who people think you are. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself and you too, will inherit eternal life.

Even Samaritans loved God. Like the woman at the well. She was a Samaritan.

So, a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, **he took pity on him**. **34He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35The next day he took out two denarii[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2010%3A25-37&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25399c)**] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’**

The Samaritan went out of his way, he went to great lengths to care for the man and to see that his care continued...

**When was the last time you were cared for like that?**

When my marriage fell apart, a good friend of mine, Margaret, cared for me like that. She lived half an hour away, and we both had young families, so it was hard to visit often, but we spent hours on the phone. Often twice a day, she’d call me to see how I was going, and I was a mess, so they weren’t short phone calls. Weeks became months. I took the kids to her playgroup every week. She invited me to her bible study. And whenever there was an event at her church, she invited me to be a part of it… she went out of her way to care for me…

**What did the expert answer** Jesus, when he asked, which character in the story was the neighbour to the man who was attacked?

“The one who showed mercy.” He couldn’t even bring himself to say, the Samaritan.

Then what did Jesus say? Go and do likewise.

We cannot make our own relationships right with God. There is nothing we can DO to EARN eternal life. It is a gift of compassion. A gift of love.

Jesus has seen us. And had pity on us. At great expense to himself, he healed us, he has done the thing we cannot do. Paid the price in full. He died once and for all. And he has promised to come back.

We don’t earn that. It is a free gift, and because of that we show compassion to others.

We love, because he first loved us.

Now there’s a character we haven’t spoken about yet. Isn’t there? **The Inn keeper.**

The Inn Keeper is to the Good Samaritan, what the hospital is to the paramedic. Or what rehab is to the hospital ward. It’s what happens after the emergency treatment. It’s the ongoing love and care.

I see the Inn Keeper in the things we do like Karyn spoke about earlier. Café. Where, as well as good food, love and care is provided.

Same with Playgroup. And Youth. Kids COACH. GrangeLife. Life Groups. Small Groups. Pastoral Care. KOWS Holiday program. Godspace. The Christian Option Program. Children and Families Ministries, and I know there’s more.… All of these are examples of the Inn Keeper. Through the opportunities that these programs and activities provide we continue to love and care for people…until Jesus returns. Perhaps you’re involved in some of them…or could be…

**So. To recap.**

Jesus uses parables to answer questions and to deal with attitudes.

You cannot earn eternal life.

Reconciliation with God is for everyone.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your strength and with all your mind. And love your neighbour as yourself.

**Let’s pray-**

Heavenly Father, Thank you for these words today. Thank you, that you first loved us. Thank you that you sent Jesus, to reconcile our relationship with you and with all of your creation. Thank you that we cannot earn it. It is your free gift of love to us. Thank youthat it is for everyone. Father show us who our neighbours are and how we can care for them, like you care for us. Show us where we can be Good Samaritans and Inn Keepers, and journey with others. Until you return. In Jesus Name we pray, amen.