



Fr David's Homily for Week 3 of the Parish Stewardship Campaign

Our Church | Our Challenge | Our Choice

Gospel Reading:
Luke 10.25-37

The Good Samaritan

*A reading from the
Holy Gospel according
to Luke.*

Glory to you, O Lord.

A lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' He answered, '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 your neighbour as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.' But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he

'Charity begin at home' is a phrase we often hear – reminding us that we have an obligation to family and friends before we look to care for the wider world.

But is this really true? Our Gospel reading today is the familiar story of the Good Samaritan. Familiar of course from Sunday School, and possibly from our schooldays; a story that finds a place in each of our hearts. It is a story so familiar, and yet it is a story that challenges our whole understanding of the order of things.

The Parable comes as an answer to a question from a lawyer, wanting to know how he might inherit eternal life. Jesus asks him what is written in the Law, and he answers correctly: the need to love God with all his heart and soul and strength, and to love his neighbour as himself.

Jesus, pleased with his answer simply says, 'do this, and you will live.' But the man is not satisfied. Like many of us, he needs further information – a further explanation of just who is his neighbour.

Now we might justifiably think that our neighbour is the person we relate to – whether our physical neighbours in our street or area, or the people we associate with socially on a daily basis. But Jesus seeks to widen that understanding fundamentally.

In the Parable, the obvious neighbours of the man who falls among the robbers fail him. The priest and the Levite simply pass by on the other side. For whatever reason they can't bring themselves to deal with the man lying injured in the road. It may simply have been too much trouble for them; they may not have wanted to get their robes dirty. But for whatever reason, they ignore his needs and walk by, leaving him to his pain and his injuries.

It eventually falls to a Samaritan – a person who is an enemy of the man lying injured – to offer love and compassion. And he does so without question. We see him pouring oil and wine on the man's wounds. We see him putting him on his own animal, and taking him to an inn. We see his generosity in paying for his lodging and care, and his further generosity in offering to pay whatever more the innkeeper needs to spend to take care of him, when he makes his return journey.

As we journey through our Stewardship Campaign, it is good to hear this parable, for the truth is that at its heart is a story of generosity.

The Samaritan is someone we might expect not to be generous at all with the man left for dead. Samaritans and Jews did not get on – and we might expect him to have taken great pleasure in the man's misfortune.

passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." 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 to him, 'Go and do likewise.'"

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

But instead, he shows his generosity in looking after a fellow human being – in offering love and concern for him. And that generosity does not stop once he has got him on his feet. No, he takes him, at his own expense, to an inn; pays for his keep, and offers to pay for any further care he might need. He demonstrates the love and generosity that Jesus calls each and every one of us to show in our dealings with our fellow human beings.

That generosity is something that can be a challenge. In Jesus's day, paying for the care of someone, when you don't know how long it will go on for, and what it might entail, was effectively like signing a blank cheque. The Samaritan would not have known what the bill might come to when he made his return journey.

And yet he simply offers to pay – he shows the generosity that Jesus calls us to share in our dealings with each other.

And Jesus calls us to show that generosity precisely because God the Father is a God who shows the perfect generosity in offering his only Son to invite us to share in the promises of the kingdom of heaven.

If we are people who are willing to receive such generosity from God, then we ought also to be people who are willing to respond with similar generosity in our dealings with each other.

The Samaritan would have had a natural suspicion of the man left for dead in the road. He would have been brought up to see him as a threat – someone to be wary of. And yet he sets all of that to one side, when he sees simply a fellow human being in need a brother under God.

As we continue through our Stewardship Campaign, we are called to see our fellow human beings as brothers and sisters in Christ – fellow members of the Church of God. And if we are to see them as brothers and sisters, then that age-old maxim 'Charity begins at home' takes on a new meaning.

For the true place for charity ought to be through the Church of God – the place where each and every one of us is called to be a brother or sister in Christ, and where we can truly experience God's love – the love of a God who is generous enough to send his only Son to die on the cross and to offer each and every one of us a share in his resurrection life.

If we are prepared to receive such generosity, then may we have the courage to look at our own generosity, to see if we can follow the example of the Samaritan in our story, and offer without condition the good things we have received in the service of our fellow human beings.

We can do that, of course, through our giving to the Church – in order that Christ's love can be made known to the people of the community in which we are set – so that the people of Accrington can come to know the generosity of a God who loves them and give his Son for them.

If we are to do that, then we need to be generous in our dealings with those who live among us, so that they, however different they might appear from us, may truly be recognised by each and every one of us, as children of God: those invited to share in his promises: those to whom the message of eternal life needs to be shared today and always. Amen.