

**Dorset South and West Circuit
Service for 10 July 2022 by Revd Gwyneth Owen**

A very warm welcome to this service, wherever you are using it.

When you're ready, I invite you to say the following service out loud and slowly, letting the words sink deep into your being. Take your time there's no bus to catch!

Hymn

1 Great God, your love has called us here, as we, by love for love were made.
Your living likeness still we bear, though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed.
We come, with all our heart and mind your call to hear, your love to find.

2 We come with self-inflicted pains of broken trust and chosen wrong,
half free, half bound by inner chains, by social forces swept along,
by powers and systems close confined, yet seeking hope for human kind.

3 Great God, in Christ you call our name and then receive us as your own,
not through some merit, right or claim, but by your gracious love alone.
We strain to glimpse your mercy seat and find you kneeling at our feet.

4 Then take the towel, and break the bread, and humble us, and call us friends.
Suffer and serve till all are fed, and show how grandly love intends
to work till all creation sings, to fill all worlds, to crown all things.

5 Great God, in Christ you set us free your life to live, your joy to share.
Give us your Spirit's liberty to turn from guilt and dull despair
and offer all that faith can do while love is making all things new.

Brian Wren b 1936. ©1975,1995 Stainer& Bell

Prayer

Gracious God, we praise you because you are a God who nudges us into your presence. You gather us, welcome us, host us - and, as we've just sung, you call us. You call us because we matter to you. You call us because it is part of your very Being to want to relate to people like us in deep and meaningful ways. We are astonished that this is so, but we lean into your loving welcome and presence andrelax. Fill us with a sense of your peace, your forgiveness, your understanding, your challenge, your deepest desire for us. We pray in the name of the Christ who always calls us. Amen.

Luke 10: 25-37

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Just then 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 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.'

REFLECTION

My mum used to love that game of "Spot the difference". I'm sure you know what I mean: two pictures with 6 slight differences between them. Your task is to spot the difference. Since she died, I have taken it upon myself to do this game in the weekend newspaper – silly, I know! It means paying real attention to the detail in the pictures.....and that is just what I am inviting you to do today with this parable of the Good Samaritan: pay attention to the details. After all, you know the story so well, so will need to work that bit harder to tease out something that is relevant in your Christian journey at this moment. Maybe we should look at the key players: 2 are real (the lawyer and Jesus) and 4 imaginary, characters in a story – the mugged man; the 2 religious leaders and the Samaritan.

The first real person is the lawyer. He's bent on 2 things – testing Jesus and justifying himself as to why he asked the question in the first place.

I wonder if we find traits of ourselves in this lawyer? Maybe traits that we're not proud of. It really is all "about me" as far as the lawyer is concerned, isn't it? This guy doesn't seem interested in authentic, open and curious conversation with Jesus, does he? This is all about trying to elevate himself at the expense of Jesus from a position where he thinks he knows all the answers. Is there food for thought here as we reflect on our own lives, I wonder?

The second real person is Jesus. To begin with Jesus goes toe to toe with the lawyer in a mini bible study. When he realises that this is not the real issue for the lawyer Jesus defaults to telling a story in order to drive home the practical outworking of the bible passage in terms of how we relate to those in need.

I think there is a danger that we Christians can quote scripture in order to answer questions that others ask us. However, so often we need to unpack how to interpret that scripture in daily living and in practical ways. In my experience, a bible quote without

interpretation simply doesn't cut the mustard. -we need the story, grounded in real life if it is to have the needful cutting edge.

The first of the imaginary figures is a man going about his daily life making a journey, we are asked to imagine, that he makes regularly. On this occasion, his life is interrupted by a disaster-he is mugged and robbed and left for dead. His ordinary daily routine has been stopped in its tracks.

Well, I think we can relate to this imaginary figure can't we? Doesn't he represent every man and every woman? We all have our daily routines and we all have experience of things life throws at us that threaten our well-being. Suddenly, we need to know more about this story – we are suddenly invested in what happens to this man because he represents every man and every woman. He represents you and me.

The second and third imaginary figures are the clergy. Bless them! The story doesn't tell us why they ignored the plight of the man who had been mugged. Yes, we can make all kinds of assumptions-but we would be missing the point. The point is that they ignored a human being in need, however good their excuses were for doing so.

It is a fact that I often ignore human beings who are in need. I wonder why? Maybe there's something about not being able to help everybody; wondering if the person in need is genuine; making some conscious or unconscious judgement about why they are in need; maybe just being frightened. I guess it's the same for most of us and I want to assure you this does not make us bad people. It does invite us, however, to ask ourselves what one person in need who crosses our path in one way or another we might help when their life has been interrupted with significant challenges.

The fourth imaginary figure in our story is the Samaritan with his famous donkey. A great amount of detail is offered in the story as to what he does to help the man who has been mugged. And always in the background is our knowledge that he was helping someone who was his traditional "enemy". The point of the story? Simply that anyone who is in need is our neighbour regardless, as the hymn says, "of the creed and the colour" and, we might add, of the lifestyle.

Jesus asks us through these imaginary characters to dismantle the imaginary barriers we can so easily have that separate us from each other rather than recognising in each other our common humanity. When we are at our best, churches are good places to be and so much happens to enable us to support each other. However, as with any other social institution, it is easy for there to be cliques and for some people to feel they belong more than others. I put it to you that we don't need to look very far to find someone in our church fellowship or wider community whom life has "mugged" in one way or another and who needs some tender loving care.

I started with the game, "spot the difference". What difference has the above reflection made to you- be it ever so slight – that will enable you with more courage to heed the direction of Jesus to the lawyer: now go, and do likewise?

Prayers of intercession

We hold in God's loving presence:

- People whose lives have been rudely interrupted by the war in Ukraine where people have literally been left on the roadside to die: or been mugged or raped or tortured. We pray for those who have been, and continue to be, Good Samaritans often crossing boundary lines in order to give care, and at considerable risk to themselves.
- The work of countless charities, some of which we support, who are reaching out to people in their time of greatest need in this country and beyond. We pray for the developing work at Westham, especially. Give to charity leaders the wisdom and the courage to use their resources wisely, we pray.
- Each other. Help us as followers of Christ to pay careful attention to his teachings, ideals and values and work out what they mean for us on a practical level as we follow in his way. We pray for those for whom we have promised to pray and hold silence as we hold them in God's presence.....
- For ourselves. Teach us, we pray, to "go and do likewise" in whatever ways are appropriate for us in our own life's circumstances.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn

*Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve
the neighbours we have from you.*

Kneels at the feet of his friends, silently washes their feet,
Master who acts as a slave to them.

CHORUS

Neighbours are rich folk and poor,
varied in colour and race,
neighbours are nearby and far away.

CHORUS

These are the ones we should serve, these are the ones we should love,
all these are neighbours to us and you.

CHORUS

kneel at the feet of our friends, silently washing their feet,
this Is the way we should live with you.

CHORUS

North Ghanian song adapted by Tom Colvin (1925-2000) ©1969 Hope Publishing Co.

May the blessing of the triune God be our richest experience, today and always.

Amen