

Who Is My Neighbour?

Sermon · August 2025 (inferred from file name)

Based on Luke 10:25-37

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Today we gather to deal with a question that shook the crowd Jesus spoke to two thousand years ago, but still echoes in our hearts: “Who is my neighbour?” It is a question that cuts right to the core of what it means to live out our faith life in a messy, divided, chaotic and ruthless world.

Let us take a moment to revisit Luke 10:25-37. A religious scholar, eager to test Jesus, asks, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” — a question that is ours, too. Jesus turns the question back to him, asking what the Law says. The scholar answers, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Luke 10:27, drawing on Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18) — the same two commandments we recite every Sunday, encapsulating the Ten Commandments. But then, pressing for clarity, he asks, “And who is my neighbour?” Jesus answers with a story — the Parable of the Good Samaritan, one of the most endearing parables of Jesus.

Let us look at the heart of the Parable: a Jewish trader travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, a notoriously dangerous road, is attacked by robbers. They strip him, beat him, and leave him half-dead. The man, profusely bleeding and dehydrating in the hot sun, was left unattended on the lonely road. First comes a priest, a man devoted to God’s service, who sees the wounded man but chooses to pass by on the other side, perhaps self-justifying, “I do not want to run late for the Temple worship; I have much to do at the Temple.” Then a Levite, another religious figure, does the same. But then, a Samaritan comes along. Remember, Samaritans and Jews had long-standing hostility for generations (John 4:9). Despite this, the Samaritan stops, kneels beside the man, and does not just offer words — he bandages the wounds, carries him to an inn, pays for his care, and promises to return.

Just imagine the joy and satisfaction he must have felt when he found the traveller was healed and had gone home, when he returned a few days later. Grateful must have been the traveller for the help he received from a total stranger.

Jesus then asks, “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?” The answer is simple: “He that shewed mercy on him.” Jesus’ command follows: “Go, and do thou likewise.”

The Parable unfolded on the Jericho Road. Several years ago, on a trip to the Holy Land, I convinced the tour guide to let me get off the bus for a few minutes on this Road. It was wilderness; I saw it exactly as Jesus described it in the story. And it was on this road that the traveller received a mighty beating. He had not even seen the thieves coming ... a blur of motion out of the hillocks ... the rambling sound of yelling and swinging clubs and then they were gone ... leaving him naked, bleeding and broken to die on the road to Jericho, stripped of all his belongings. Helpless, life slowly oozing out, he wondered if this would be the day he would die ... here on the Road ... alone ... uncared for. Would he ever see his lovely family again? Standing on that lonely road, reflecting on the Parable gave me a perspective on our associations with others that I had not imagined before. Yes, the word you are looking for is Empathy. Empathy is the Pathway to True Neighbourliness.

Empathy, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. It involves imaginatively entering into another person’s feelings and experiencing things from their perspective. Empathy lies at the heart of this Parable. It is more than sympathy or pity — it is stepping into another’s shoes and feeling their pain. The Samaritan’s actions were not born from obligation, but from compassion and empathy. As Romans 12:15 reminds us, “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Empathy crosses barriers and prejudices. It asks, “If I were in this person’s place, what would I hope for?”

So today, let us ask ourselves: Do we genuinely see the hurt around us? Or do we walk by, distracted or indifferent? Empathy calls us to slow down, to notice the hurting, to care deeply, to drop inhibitions, and to act boldly. Look around you in the pews: Do you detect distress on the face of someone? What do we intend to do about it? And for those who have something to unburden, look out for the “Help Desk” set up outside. Someone from our Help Desk team will listen to you patiently and in confidence, and will direct you to the Pastor, an elder, or someone else who could help you.

Jesus’ Parable goes deeper than kindness to strangers. The Samaritan was an enemy by social standards, yet he became the example of neighbourly love. Jesus turns the question upside down: it is not about “Who is my neighbour?” but “To whom can I be a neighbour?”

This radical love echoes Jesus’ own words in Matthew 5:44 — “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Loving those we find hard to love is a challenge that breaks down walls and builds bridges. It may take years to do that. But you have God the Holy Spirit to help you, and you can do it. It means forgiving those who hurt us (Colossians 3:13), praying for those who oppose us, and reaching across divisions. Let us pause and examine our hearts. Have we prepared the soil of our hearts with scriptural learnings, the teachings of Jesus, and irrigated it with the sprinkle of the Holy Spirit? (Recall the profound parable of the Sower.) It is only from such good soil that the shoots of love and Empathy will spring up, healthy and deep-rooted. Loving our enemies will break down walls.

The question I want to ask you is, have you seen this person who was left to die? I have, many times, in my eighty-two years on this planet. But most of the time, I did nothing about him. I regret the opportunities I forfeited. The significant question that looms over me is whether I will have enough time to make up for them. So, friends, today, introspect and ask yourself this question. Where is God calling us to extend neighbourly love? If you are wondering where you will find that neighbour you would help, let me tell you: they are found on the Jericho Road in our society. The road that encircles us. The Jericho Road, at times, even runs right through our homes.

It is always on the Jericho Road. You see, the Jericho Road is any place where there is violence; it is any place where there is oppression, persecution; it is any place where people are robbed of their dignity, robbed of their love, robbed of their food, and robbed of their freedom. The Jericho Road is always with us. The opportunities surround us, often in places we overlook. Here are a few references:

At Home: Our closest neighbours might be our own family — spouses needing patience and attention, children craving affirmation, parents longing for attention, and elders seeking company. Ephesians 6:1-4 reminds us to honour and nurture these relationships.

In Our Communities: Look around your neighbourhood. Is there an older person living alone? A single parent struggling to make ends meet? A newcomer feeling lost? Jesus tells us in Matthew 25:40, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

At Work and School: Are there people being ignored, bullied, or isolated? Maybe a co-worker feels overwhelmed, depressed, or a student feels invisible. Galatians 6:2 tells us to “bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

In the Wider World: When news of political upheavals, war, injustice, or disaster reaches us, when we hear of innocent nuns jailed, how do we respond? The whole world is our neighbourhood. Proverbs 31:8-9 urges us to “open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction; open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.”

In Your Church Family: Last but not least, behind the pleasantries, smiles, and handshakes, we hide our dislikes, deceptions, one-upmanship, gossip, and neglect. This could be a good place to start practising the neighbourliness Jesus commanded us about.

Finding the Neighbour: A Shift in Perspective

The question shifts from “Who is my neighbour?” to “To whom can I show mercy?” In truth, anyone in need is our neighbour, no matter race, religion, or background. The Samaritan did not hesitate because of labels or history — he saw a human being in need and met him at the point of his need.

God often calls us to love people who challenge us, who do not look like us or think like us. Jesus himself reached out to tax collectors, sinners, and outcasts. This boundary-breaking love calls us to step beyond comfort zones and embrace the unexpected neighbour.

I leave you with a few pointers you may consider on your neighbourly journey:

- **Open Your Eyes:** Be present and alert, even in your daily routine — notice who is hurting or overlooked.
- **Open Your Heart:** Resist judgment or indifference. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with compassion (Romans 5:5).
- **Open Your Hands:** Take concrete steps. Listen without rushing to fix, share a meal, give your time or resources.
- **Break Down Barriers:** Is there a “Samaritan” in your life — someone you avoid or dislike? Begin with a simple act of kindness or a heartfelt conversation.
- **Pray for Enemies:** Follow Jesus’ call in Luke 6:27-28 to love enemies and pray for those who mistreat you. Pray for healing, courage, and reconciliation.

In conclusion, Jesus’ challenge stands firm: “Go, and do thou likewise.” Embody mercy in a world that desperately

needs it. Go across social, racial, and religious boundaries. See the suffering around you and respond. May God grant us eyes to see truly, hearts wide open to love, and the courage to act, until everyone we meet knows they are valued, seen, and loved as our neighbour.

Amen.