

Neighbour | September 23, 2018

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Luke 10. 25-37

The story Jesus tells is born of a wriggly question, to which he gives an un-wriggly answer; an uncomfortable punchline. If we want to know God's full, eternal life in the here and now, we'll have to get used to our lines getting scrubbed out; our walls coming down. This is good news, as we're reminded that God doesn't wriggle out of love with humanity, but also a challenge as we must learn to be open-hearted to one another, just as God is toward us.

What might learning to love our neighbour as ourself mean? What are some first steps?

Stopping (to look an to listen)

- Loving neighbour as self will usually have something to do with discovering the power of stopping in a rushed and distracted society; learning the subtle power of making ourselves available.
- This is a learning to see the other with dignity, as another being worthy of our time.
- We are given this example numerous times through the gospels and in God's general disposition toward humanity. Here is a God who speaks; but just as profound - here is a God who *listens*.

Joining (with compassion and kindness)

- Stopping leads to joining; the other is not "other than" us, really. This is not an object to pass or push, but a person to stand or sit with. Here we enter into the "togetherness" really; not viewing the others as "creature bound on other

journeys", but "fellow passengers", as Charles Dickens wrote in his story *A Christmas Carol*.

- Again, we see this no more clearly than in Jesus himself. Here is a God who joins, not one who merely *dispenses* from afar. This is key in understand God's very nature and also our own as his creatures, made in his image.

Sharing (through generous service)

- Stopping and joining will lead to sharing. This is the Samaritan's work, in viewing the other not as "other than" they are willing to do what they can for the other, give what they must for the wellbeing of the one in need.
- Jesus is once again our example of the human who gets it right. John 13 tells us of the foot washing, an action which points to the cross. Here is a God who shares his very life with us, to the very end. Here is a God who pays our bills.
- And this is what the Church, at it's best, will be - here is a people who pays one another's bills. And here is a people who will do this this for anyone who knocks on the door, because of what God has done for them.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do we so often view the other as "other than" us? How does Jesus change that?
- Think of and share a time you felt listened to, or joined with, or shared with.
- What does/might time taking and making ourselves available look like in your life?