

Kindness: Sharing the love

As we've heard in our Bible reading, somebody once asked Jesus what God would say is the best way to live. He already knew the answer, but was just testing Jesus.

Jesus got him to quote from the Bible where it says it is 'to love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength; and to love our neighbour as ourselves.' The questioner sensed maybe some wriggle room, so cautiously asked Jesus, 'So, what does the Bible exactly mean by neighbour? Is it just the person next door maybe?'

Jesus then told this story.

(Bold denotes action).

Once, **a man** was travelling from a big city to a small city. He **reached up high** to fetch his **big suitcase** down from the top of the wardrobe and **began packing** for his journey. He put in all sorts of things (invite suggestions).

He then *tried to close the suitcase*, but it was too full. **He pushed and shoved; he jumped on it, sat on it.** It was no good. He had to **remove some of the items**. He eventually **managed to close the suitcase**. Now, this wasn't a fancy one on wheels, so he had to **carry it** in the old-fashioned way. He **picked up his heavy suitcase, staggering with its weight** as he **waved goodbye** to his family and his friends in Jerusalem, which was the big city, to **set out** on the journey south to Jericho, the small city.

The road down to Jericho wasn't an easy one. There were **rocks to avoid, potholes to walk around** and even **donkey poo to step over**. On top of that, the **suitcase was heavy** and the road was downhill, so he had to **go very carefully**. The road became more and more lonely and the rocks either side looked more and more menacing. The man with the suitcase was now **walking very nervously indeed**.

Now, this was a well-known road for robbers **lurking behind the rocks** who were **looking out for a lone traveller** coming down the road. In the distance they **caught sight** of a traveller with a fat suitcase getting closer and closer. They **poised themselves ready for the attack**; then they **leapt out, punching,**

kicking, grabbing all they could from the poor traveller, taking his posh clothes, his suitcase and giving him a final big kick before they ran and ran as fast as they could.

Look at the poor traveller lying by the road, half-dead and with everything taken from him. He needs help. He needs some kindness.

Just then, **another traveller came down the road**. He was a priest in the temple in Jerusalem and was **reading from his scroll** as he walked, thinking about the great law of God; about loving God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength, and your neighbour as yourself. He was going to give a sermon about it in the synagogue down in Jericho. When suddenly, **he spotted the poor man** lying half-dead in a pool of blood by the side of the road, needing help. The priest daren't touch the blood and he **was scared as he looked around**. Maybe there were other robbers waiting to come and attack him. **He thought about what to do**. He knew what he should do, but instead he **ran away as fast as he could**.

Sometime later **another traveller came down the road**. This man also worked in the temple and was a musician **practising his favourite instrument**. He helped lead the singing in the temple and he was **humming to himself** as he worked out a song that might tell the story about how we should love God with all our heart and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. When suddenly, **he too spotted the victim** beside the road, lying half-dead and desperately in need of some help and in a bigger pool of blood. This was someone from Jerusalem; someone he knew; someone who used to worship in the temple. **He thought about what he should do**. He knew what he should do. But maybe this was a trap. 'If I stop to help, maybe they'll get me too.' He **thought about it again**, but not much before he **ran away as fast as he could**.

Finally, **a third traveller came down the road**. This man **had a big smile on his face**. He was so glad to be away from Jerusalem. He hated Jerusalem and its people. He came from a place called Samaria, where he believed the true Jews were. He didn't even talk to the people from Jerusalem. He was so happy as he **led his donkey along the road** to Jericho. Then **he spotted the man** who had been beaten up, left half-dead and who was in desperate need of help. He could see this man was from Jerusalem; someone he would never normally talk to, let alone touch. And someone who would never normally talk to, let aloe touch. And someone who would never talk to him. **He thought about it** but then **he had pity on the victim, got on his knees to help, washed the**

man's wounds with oil, put his own coat on him, lifted him up onto the donkey and led the donkey and the man down the road to the nearest small hotel. He paid for a room for the night and stayed with him, caring for him and the next morning he gave the hotel manager enough money for more days of caring and promised to come back if more money was needed. Then **he went on his way to Jericho.**

When Jesus finished this story, the crowd was silent and shocked, amazed by the characters Jesus had chosen. The two religious people hadn't shown any kindness at all. They knew all about loving God and loving your neighbour as yourself, but they hadn't shared that love with the poor man on the ground. But the Samaritan, the one who they all hated, had shown great kindness and compassion.

Jesus then turned to the man who had asked the question and said, 'Which of these was a true neighbour to the man who needed help?'

It was obvious what the answer was but at first no-one dared say.

What was Jesus telling them? What was he saying about loving God and loving our neighbour?

Embarrassed, the man mumbled, 'The one who showed compassion.'

Jesus then turned and said, 'Go and do the same as that Samaritan.'

For some, that was perhaps the hardest part of the story to hear. I wonder if you agree.

There is no doubt about it. The Samaritan man showed great kindness in looking after the man who'd been beaten up. But very few of us will ever find ourselves in this situation. But there are lots of ways in which we can both show, and receive kindness, from others.

Think for a moment: What is the greatest act of kindness that you have either seen or received? Share responses.

One of the best World Cup moments so far was the action of Gareth Southgate, England's manager, on Tuesday night after that much-talked about penalty shoot-out, where Southgate hugged Mateus Uribe, the Colombian player who missed his penalty. This picture went viral soon after the match ended.

Being kind to others is the way we show God's love to others. To love as God loves us. Jesus spoke a lot about love when he was on the earth. He told us to love one another as he loves us, and he even said that we should love our enemies, just as the Samaritan man showed love and kindness to the man in need, a man who was very different from him.

I wonder if there's something you could do today, this week, to make the world a little brighter. To show kindness to another, to share God's love?