

(PP1) The Jesus we never knew 2017 x31.

(PP2) How Jesus behaves with people, who are different from him and exhibit difficult behaviour. 30 July_2017. All age

READ: Luke 10: 25 – 37 “The Good Samaritan”. From Jericho to Jerusalem is about 15 miles and probably takes about 8 – 9 hours strenuous walking and clambering to journey it. A dangerous road to travel alone in Jesus’ day because bandits could easily attack and rob you. (1,000 meters height difference, Jericho 800 ft below sea level)

<http://www.israeltoday.co.il/NewsItem/tabid/178/nid/26863/Default.aspx>

Drone coverage of journey of Jericho to Jerusalem.

(Thank XStreams and Rivers group for their filming...)

As we seek to follow and learn from Jesus a challenge is presented to us about how we relate to people who are often different to us – indeed they share our weak and broken humanness. We are as people, (particularly living in very diverse London) meeting people who are not just different to us in terms of age, personalities and background but also different in terms of culture and practices. During the weeks that we’ve been thinking about this, quite a few people have spoken to me about the challenge you felt in thinking about your own behaviour towards people at work, family, neighbourhood who may be very different to you or who even behave badly so that you find it difficult to respond to their behaviour positively. It is often hard I think to fulfil Jesus’ command to love neighbour as you love yourself. His command is stark – love neighbour as you love yourself (not be mildly indifferent to neighbour). It’s not enough to say – I don’t hate them. The command is love them and love one another AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.

Some of you found this: -

Question significant. Do we see people who are different to us and even those we find difficult in their behaviour to us and others as a “gift” – God given and an opportunity for us to grow as people and to grow in holiness? Do we thank God for them? (PP3)

“Regardless, by growing in holiness we can learn to accept the inconvenient, the incongruent and the bothersome (people and events) in our life not just as necessary nuisances but as gifts.” (1)

So, if an event happens like the one described by Jesus on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem do we see it as a “gift” or a nuisance? If we came across someone – anyone in need would we see it as a gift of God, an opportunity or just a nuisance or even danger to be avoided. Jesus used this parable to highlight the difference responses that can be given to the needs of suffering humanity. Some people, even religious people want to walk by on the other side and ignore the need of neighbour but others don’t they are compassionate and will use their own resources, their time and even put themselves in danger to show practical love.

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Jesus told this parable in response to the question of the Scribe (Teacher of the Law) – ***What must I do to receive eternal life?*** Jesus' answer was simple: *love God with everything you have and are and love your neighbour as you love yourself.* The Scribe wanting to justify himself – his behaviour and actions asked: ***who is my neighbour?*** Jesus told the parable and got the Scribe to confess with his mouth that the one who acted like a neighbour was the one who showed kindness to the suffering man. Jesus then commanded – ***You go, then, and do the same.***

(PP4) “Watch my back”. The road from Jericho to Jerusalem was a dangerous road to travel alone. Often in Jesus' day and even today if travelling by foot or on modern roads it's advisable to group together with others and watch one another's backs. We haven't got 360 degree vision – we only see forwards and sideways without turning our heads. I want again to encourage you in this month of August when so many people are travelling or remaining to have your spiritual eyes open and to watch out for one another in prayer and care. Also watch out for those in need – for those who have fallen or been attacked on the journey – go to one another's assistance. (Hilary and Neil can tell you of the 3 off duty police women who came to their assistance in Italy when Hilary fell. They lifted her and called the ambulance and got her safely to hospital. How would they have managed if no one came to their help?). Why help? Well it's the truly human thing to do and also because God has come to our rescue – because we have fallen and been injured. He showed his love for suffering humanity by sending the rescuer Jesus Christ.

PRAYER used in recent weeks. How do I see others? (PP5)

JESUS, help me see you in everyone, even the people who challenge me. Light me up with your radiant love so that I may see you even in the most difficult people. Every human being is made in your image. Help me to recognise you in them and love you in them. Amen. (2)