

(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 25 Sunday 24 June_2018.

Background text READ **LUKE 10: 25 – 37. Human choices?**

This year we are exploring what it means to be truly, fully human. Also, I believe that as we seek individually and together in community to be more human we will bring greater glory to God by the way we live our lives in relationship to others and with God. Transformation through relating in Community as well as relating to God.

Pray for the scales to fall from their eyes, the plugs to come out of their ears and the hard shell of their heart to be removed. They will not change just by the clear simple message being shared. (Word NP brought after last week's talk).

The image of God in humans – is NOT seen in a physical form likeness (as God is spirit) but in terms of knowledge and moral awareness and the possibility of relating in friendship to God. Seen also in the Trinitarian constitution of human beings – social nature and human experience of community reflecting the divine being-in-community of the Godhead. *Barth* included the man-woman relationship in this. **Humans in relation to our neighbours – we are social animals (Calvin).** The entire story of the Bible is around a community – the people of God. Individual persons are spoken of as accountable throughout but the word of Genesis 2: 18 it is not good for the man to be alone is also sustained. Cain's question to God (*Genesis 4: 9*) **Am I my brother's keeper** gets the answer yes, all the way through the Bible – we are supposed to take care of our brothers and sisters and we are to be watched over by one another.

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan – Jesus affirms the need to “love neighbour” (*Leviticus 19:18*) and **to make right choices about what loving neighbour means.** He is illustrating not just that the Law of Moses commanded us to love God and also neighbour but that each us has choices as to what actions and responses we will make.

In the Parable 3 men get to make choices as to how they will respond to a man in need. The man has chosen to travel the dangerous route from Jerusalem to Jericho alone. This is a dangerous choice because bandits are able to hide easily in the steep and rugged road. The man has been robbed and badly beaten and left naked by the road side to die. Three men pass by: one a Jewish Priest, the second a Jewish Levite (landless priestly cast) and the third – a Samaritan (half blood or dual heritage, mixed race – despised). The first 2 have high status to the Jewish Scribe. Teacher of the Law who asked Jesus the question about – **who is my neighbour?** He would have despised the Samaritan – religious hatred.

The first 2 do not get involved – **that's their choice** – they pass by on the other side even though they've seen him. To “get involved” would have made them ritually unclean – he may well be dead – and they would have to perform various cleansing times before they could pray again. Maybe they also chose not to get involved because of the time

and expense involved – it would quite simply cost them time, money, effort and emotional energy.

How much easier it would be often to decide/ choose not to get involved in other people's lives. How much easier to either pretend we had not seen or heard something. How much easier to say – it's not my responsibility to care about my brother or my sisters' problems. Yet we believe the Bible teaches that we do have responsibility for one another and we are to love our neighbour. (It does not say that we are to love our neighbour if they are of the same race or nation as us. It does not say love your neighbour if they are the same age as you, or the same gender as you, or dress like you or speak like you – it commands us to love our neighbour.

Who is my neighbour? Simply **whoever I encounter, my fellow human being, the person who is in need of help.** To act like a neighbour – is **to show kindness.** To act like a neighbour is to get involved and not to ignore – it is not to turn a blind eye or to turn a deaf ear.

Complication: it is not always easy to judge what is the right thing to do in many circumstances. The choices may be difficult. Some people may resent or resist other peoples' involvement. In the example Jesus used it was obvious what needed doing and the man was semi-conscious, so the Samaritan simply tended the wounds and then took him on his donkey to the nearest inn/ hostel for him to stay until he recovered. But in other cases, it is less easy. For example, if you have an elderly relative or neighbour who is clearly not coping and becoming a danger to themselves – what do you do?

Only Humans Have Morality, Not Animals. Only humans make moral judgements and moral choices.

Human beings, unlike other animals, are able to reflect on and make judgements about our own and others' actions, and as a result we are able to make considered moral choices.

*We are not born with this ability. (Some think myself included that we do have an **internal awareness that needs nurture**) As the developmental psychologist Jean Piaget showed, children progress from a very limited understanding of morality to a more sophisticated understanding - involving, for instance, the consideration of the motives and intentions behind particular acts.*

Human beings have something that no other animal has: an ability to participate in a collective cognition. Because we, as individuals, are able to draw on the collective knowledge of humanity, in a way no animal can, our individual abilities go way beyond what evolution has endowed us with. Our species is no longer constrained by our biology.

Many scientists reject any notion that human beings have abilities that are profoundly different from other animals. To do so, they fear, will give ammunition to creationists and spiritualists. But we do not need spiritual or 'magical' explanations to grasp that the difference between human beings and other animals is fundamental rather than one of

degrees. **(The Bible teaches the difference in terms of the dominion and stewardship role given in creation to humans).**

Helene Guldberg Ph.D. *Reclaiming Childhood*

The consequences of non-involvement or concern for others.

One of the prime marks of the modern mindset is **INDIVIDUALISM** (and the removal of landmark authority e.g. the Bible). Individualism and self-actualisation is stressed rather than community and responsibility for and accountability to one another. Without an awareness of moral responsibility, we can easily “use” or exploit our neighbour. (We have to make decisions together as to how much power or responsibility we give to the State and how much we leave to neighbour and neighbourhood to operate).

Individually we have freedom, but we also have moral responsibility for one another. Do you accept that idea? The Bible teaches that we will answer to God as to have we have acted on the command to “love neighbour” and to care for our brothers and sisters.

The stress on INDIVIDUALISM rather than the good of the community or society has economic consequences. The work and pursuit for personal wealth and economic well being becomes the driving force for many. This alone can undermine our concern for those outside our own immediate sphere of family or company.

As Christian followers of Jesus our concern for “God’s Kingdom and righteousness” – pleasing God has to be the value system by which we evaluate our own search for personal wealth and actualisation. If I get rich but neglect my church, my community am I really building for God?

The Good Samaritan had time to get involved, to show concern. He made choices to get involved – even though it cost him in terms of time, effort and emotional energy and personal safety. He was able to see, to hear (groans or cry for help) to feel.

“Watching over one another in love” – belonging to church and society and planet. Loving neighbour and fellow followers of Jesus.

JESUS perfectly embodied the command to love neighbour. He even stuck his nose in where it wasn’t welcome because he protected the vulnerable. He gave himself fully for his fellow men and women – even to laying down his life for them. (Romans 5:8)

For US – you and me union with Jesus Christ means a union with his people, the church (1C 12: 13). We are called to solidarity with brothers and sisters and to “watch over one another in love” and we are called to love and therefore show kindness to neighbour.

WE will often therefore be moving against the grain of the INDIVIDUALISM of society? As we follow Jesus a new realism about ourselves should arise (through our inner life development with God and in community). There should be a new freedom from self-pre-occupation as our lives are set in relation to the whole purpose of God. *(Bruce Milne, Know the Truth, pp151,152.)*

Becoming human- giving glory. 29 April_2018.

As we follow Jesus we will have not just a concern to love neighbour but also to *watch over one another in love* in the church but also a concern for the planet and its future. We have not just the power, but the God given responsibility to make moral choices that benefit all and bring glory to God. We need one another's help in this – to use our freedom well.

For us the promised return of Jesus Christ is not just an end of the world apocalyptic scenario but the beginning of a New Age of justice in the New heaven and New Earth. We seek as individuals and a community to work for it now.