**Sermon: Caring for a wounded world...**

**Reading**: Luke 10:25-37

The Bible reading that we’ve just been listening to and singing about is certainly one of the best known and loved stories in all the scriptures. And, in no small part, this is because there are some classic story telling ingredients at the heart of it.

There is a dramatic event at the start that grabs our attention and our concern for the victim.

Then there is the unveiling of some distinctive and memorable characters in the form of the unlikely villains.

Of course, there is then the arrival of our hero, who comes to the rescue and then goes well beyond what would have been expected of him – putting his own safety at risk and giving of his own possessions to help a stranger.

There is also the twist, in both his identity and the identity of the people who walk on by. In both cases, there is a surprise – the holy men would have had so much more expected of them, but show how shallow their faith is. And our hero would have had very little expected of him, being someone that most people would have assumed to be a sworn enemy of the victim.

And then finally, there is the challenge to the reader – what does this story mean for me? Who is my neighbour? Who or what do I ignore? And could I follow the example of the Good Samaritan – putting my safety, my reputation and my possessions at risk to help not just a stranger, but an enemy?!

These are compelling images and questions and it is no wonder that this parable is one of the few that is still widely known among young and old. And the challenges it poses are certainly no less for us today than they would have been for the original hearers.

So, who is our neighbour in need today? Where ought we to be stopping to help, and not just a quick “are you alright?” – Jesus is not advocating sympathetic glances or words of concern, but sustained action, long-term investment in someone or something from which we may never see a return or receive a “thank you”.

Well, sadly, it’s pretty easy to think of loads of examples in which we all fall short. On a very local level, I imagine that we’re all guilty at times of looking the other way when driving on Kings Road or Teehey Lane, while someone is hoping for a Good Samaritan to let them out! This might seem like a small event, but such events can transform the mood of those involved, both the giver and the receiver.

And a similar theme of noticing each other can extend to acknowledging passers by in the street, children on their own in the playground, and, perhaps most importantly, neighbours, who rarely have any contact with others, because we are all so busy or so worried about engaging with the unknown. Too often we’ve become strangers to those who live on our doorstep and we really do need to reach out if we are to create more trust and less fear in our communities.

Beyond the local, there are many other examples of where we might stand accused of walking on by… Have we really stopped and attended to the stranger trying desperately to escape war torn lands, famine and disease? Have we knelt alongside families in refugee camps or those who still have to walk miles to find clean water or the most basic medical provision?

Whenever we turn off the news and do nothing, whenever we campaign for stronger borders and buy into the rhetoric of fear about migrants or Muslims, then we walk on by, we become the priest or the temple worker for our time.

And then there’s the environment. We sit out here this morning in beautiful surrounds and it’s really hard to imagine that there is a global climate emergency here and now. And yet, we cannot claim to have missed the constant calls to action, the headlines from around the world and the queues of experts lining up to tell us that we must all stop and do something.

We have had years of warnings and still we buy and dump millions of tonnes of plastic packaging, we replace our clothes far too often, we carry on eating beef, driving when we don’t need to, and ignoring the huge impact of air travel. Every day, we walk past a wounded planet and so often we do nothing. And even if we do stop, our actions are rarely enough to bring healing and hardly ever of the long-term investment that the Samaritan demonstrated.

We all need to hear this parable afresh. We all need to reimagine where the wounded are to be found and how we can be the good Samaritan to our neighbours, to the stranger and to our world. There are plenty of opportunities out there and we are not really living unless we invest in them.

As we read in the thoughts for the week on our news sheets: “You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.” And as Barak Obama says in the second quote, when we do act in this way, that is where we will find our hope, not just for the health of our world, but also in how we feel as people living in it. When we live for others, we live for God and, in doing so, we allow God to live in us.

Let us pray…