

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Who is my neighbour?

There was a lawyer who, to disconcert Jesus, stood up and said to him, 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.' 'You have answered right,' said Jesus, 'do this and life is yours'.

But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of brigands; they took all he had, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveller who came upon him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him on to his own mount, carried him to the inn and looked after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said "and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have." Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into brigands' hands?' 'The one, who took pity on him', he replied. Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do the same yourself'.

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.**

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Reflections on the Gospel

REMOVING THE LABEL

Centuries of familiarity with the phrase 'Good Samaritan' have dulled us to the shock involved in putting together the two terms – 'good' and 'Samaritan' – in the time of Jesus. For Jews at that time Samaritans were not 'good' but 'bad' (see John 4:9). Equivalents today would be 'good terrorist' or 'good people smuggler'.

So we can ask, as Jesus tells the parable, what would his Jewish audience have expected when they learn that the third traveller on the road is a Samaritan? Surely in contrast to the priest and Levite, he won't just pass by. He'll see if there are any more valuables to rob and perhaps finish the man off once and for all!

But, surprise! surprise! when this alien approaches the wounded man, it is not to injure or exploit him but to exercise practical compassion in a most extreme degree.

The Samaritan does not see a conventional ethnic label – 'Jew' – hanging round his neck but simply a fellow human being in need of help. His 'goodness' smashes through the label that we so readily put upon the stranger as a way of coping with difference.

Before urging any action, the parable challenges *attitude* and *vision*. How do I see another person? Do I see primarily an ethnic, cultural, social or occupational tag? Or do I penetrate through all these surface things and see a fellow human being who needs me to *be* neighbour?

The Samaritan is exemplary ('good') not only in what he does, but, before that, in the way he *sees* other people, sees through the label.

Brendan Byrne, SJ

THE SAVING WORD

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / C

14 JULY 2019

FIRST READING

Deut 30:10-14

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy

Let the instruction of the Lord God be near you.

Moses said to the people: 'Obey the voice of the Lord your God, keeping those commandments and laws of his that are written in the Book of this Law, and you shall return to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul.

'For this Law that I enjoin on you today is not beyond your strength or beyond your reach. It is not in heaven, so that you need to wonder, "Who will go up to heaven for us and bring it down to us, so that we may hear it and keep it?" Nor is it beyond the seas, so that you need to wonder, "Who will cross the seas for us and bring it back to us, so that we may hear it and keep it?" No, the Word is very near to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart for your observance.'

■ **The word of the Lord.**

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 68:14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36-37. R. cf. v. 33

R. Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

1. This is my prayer to you, / my prayer for your favour. / In your great love, answer me, O God, / with your help that never fails: Lord, answer, for your love is kind; / in your compassion, turn towards me. **R.**

2. As for me in my poverty and pain / let your help, O God, lift me up. / I will praise God's name with a song; / I will glorify him with thanksgiving. **R.**

3. The poor when they see it will be glad / and God-seeking hearts will revive; / for the Lord listens to the needy / and does not spurn his servants in their chains. **R.**

4. For God will bring help to Zion / and rebuild the cities of Judah. / The sons of his servants shall inherit it; / those who love his name shall dwell there. **R.**



SECOND READING

Col 1:15-20

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians

All things were created through him and for him.

Christ Jesus is the image of the unseen God and the first-born of all creation, for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible, Thrones, Dominations, Sovereignities, Powers – all things were created through him and for him. Before anything was created, he existed, and he holds all things in unity. Now the Church is his body, he is its head.

As he is the Beginning, he was first to be born from the dead, so that he should be first in every way; because God wanted all perfection to be found in him and all things to be reconciled through him and for him, everything in heaven and everything on earth, when he made peace by his death on the cross.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Jn 6:63,68

Alleluia, alleluia! Your words, Lord, are spirit and life; you have the words of everlasting life. Alleluia!