

## Words of Welcome

One of the well-known stories in the Bible is the focus of our worship today. It is an opportunity to think about our understanding of what it means to be a neighbour. May our worship together make you reflect on your life, bring peace, and nudge you out of your comfort zone. We begin with a call to worship.

## Call to Worship

Blessed is God, who created us and loves us beyond measure.

**Blessed is God, who calls us to stop measuring out our love.**

Blessed is God, who speaks and tells us stories about ourselves.

**Blessed is God, who reveals to us who we are and who we could be.**

Blessed is God, whose compassion is poured out on every single person.

**Blessed is God, who gives us compassion to share with every single person, even people we do not know or care about.**

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## \*Hymn

### *Love the Lord your God*

715

Love the Lord your God with all your heart.

Love the Lord your God with all your soul.

Love the Lord your God with all your mind.

Love the Lord your God with all that you are.

Words and music Jean and Jim Strathdee © 1991, Desert Flower.

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## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

God of all beginnings,

we come today with praise on our lips and in our hearts.

We stand in awe of all you have created: the vast expanse of a starry night and the tiny beauty of a raindrop together reflect your glory.

You have blessed creation with life and meaning.

Your love makes a beginning in us, too, O God,

in each new life born into the world,

in each new friendship formed,

in each kindling attraction,

in each kind word and act for neighbour or stranger.

We praise you, O God, for your love moving in the world around us,  
lived out in Jesus

and by the Spirit at work in us.

All praise and glory belong to you, Source, Saviour, and Spirit of Love,  
one God, now and always.

**God of loving kindness,  
Jesus called us to love you above all else,  
and our neighbour as ourselves.  
Yet we often fail to act in loving ways.  
We are distracted by our own needs, forgetful of the needs of others.  
We let differences divide us  
and excuse ourselves from reaching out.  
Forgive us, O God.  
Create in us new hearts so we can live and love faithfully in Jesus' name.**

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Holy God, this is the time when we quiet our hearts and our minds,  
to pay attention—  
to *really* pay attention—  
to what you have to say to us today.  
Fill us with your Word, and give us understanding  
by your Holy Spirit, that having heard your Word,  
we may live lives worthy of you and please you in every way. Amen.

Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year C, Volume 2 © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press. P82-83.

## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

Friends, hear and believe the good news of the Gospel.  
In Jesus Christ, God's generous love reaches out to embrace us.  
In Christ, we are forgiven and set free to begin again.  
Let us give thanks for God's mercy and be at peace with God,  
with ourselves and each other.

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

- 25 Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus.  
“Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?”
- 26 He answered, “What’s written in God’s Law? How do you interpret it?”
- 27 He said, “That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer  
and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you  
do yourself.”
- 28 “Good answer!” said Jesus. “Do it and you’ll live.”
- 29 Looking for a loophole, he asked, “And just how would you define  
‘neighbor’?”
- 30–32 Jesus answered by telling a story. “There was once a man traveling from  
Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his  
clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest  
was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across  
to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided  
the injured man.

- 33–35 “A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I’ll pay you on my way back.’
- 36 “What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?”
- 37 “The one who treated him kindly,” the religion scholar responded. Jesus said, “Go and do the same.”

The Message (MSG). Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson

## **Message** The Neighbour

How do you define a neighbour? Is it someone who lives along side of you? Or do you have a broader definition of who your neighbour is or might be?

The scripture that you just heard read most of us know as the “Good Samaritan” story. It is probably one of the most well-known stories of the Bible. There are laws throughout the world and in Canada that are called Good Samaritan Laws that are based in this biblical story. As I researched to prepare for this message, I learned of a law in Canada that I didn’t know existed. It is called, “The *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act* [and] applies to anyone seeking emergency support during an overdose, including the person experiencing an overdose. The Act protects the person who seeks help, whether they stay or leave from the overdose scene before help arrives. The Act also protects anyone else who is at the scene when help arrives.<sup>1</sup>

There are some things the act does not protect against like more serious offences, such as, outstanding warrants, production and trafficking of controlled substances, and all other crimes not outlined within the Act. Hopefully those are not things you have to be concerned with but having said that, this sermon may have something to say to anyone that finds themselves in personally challenging circumstance when making a choice about helping someone or protecting ones own best interests, but we will get to that later.

Anyway, you get where I am going with this. The story of the Good Samaritan is one that has influenced recent crises and laws and so this parable is not foreign to most people even if they are of no faith or another faith tradition that has no ties to Christianity.

Yet could it be that naming this story “The Good Samaritan” we limiting the scope of the parable’s depth of meaning? When Eugene Peterson titled this section of the scripture from Luke he went with “Defining Neighbor” and this may be more to the point of what Jesus was getting at as he had this discussion with the religion scholar. Let’s go back to the beginning of that conversation.

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<sup>1</sup> [About the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act - Canada.ca](#) Accessed July 8, 2022.

Now a religion scholar was someone at the time who knew the Hebrew scriptures well. He begins with the question, “Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life? Well, Jesus being Jesus didn’t answer him directly, but asked another question in response, the question being, “What’s written in God’s Law?” and “How do you interpret that?”

The scholar responds with an answer straight out of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, respectively. He knew his stuff, but there were also all these other rules that had been developed over time and some of it was about what made a person unclean and so not able to be with others and how that might affect relationships. One can learn about those things, but suffice it to say for our purposes that Jesus’ teaching throughout the gospels seem to point to the problem these rules had created beyond what God had commanded.

And then the scholar goes that one step further that allows Jesus to tell a story that demonstrates the answer. The scholar, wanting to get a definitive or at least clearer answer about who might be considered a neighbour or as The Message says, “Looking for a loophole, he asked, ‘And just how would you define neighbor?’”

Looking for a loophole. Even now we look for loopholes to define who is our neighbour. We like to think of our neighbours as those who live on the same block as us, whether we talk to them or not. We may have good neighbours or we may have what we call bad neighbours. We have the neighbours that come for coffee and the neighbours we complain about because their music is too loud or they are not taking care of their yards. If you live in an apartment or seniors complex your neighbour may have the volume on their TV or gaming console turned up to loud or they leave a mess, or they gossip.

Getting a little ahead of myself, let me share a story that can demonstrate what it might mean to help out this kind of neighbour. In a book titled *Can a Busy Christian Develop Her Spiritual Life?* Jill Briscoe writes:

Years ago, as I waited in line at a local shop, I heard the gossip. My neighbor’s husband had left her. The night before he had packed his things into a van and driven out of her life.

I knew my neighbor casually. When we did speak, which wasn’t often, it was about the weather. Our subdivision was the type where people led their own lives and neighbors didn’t really get to know one another.

When I returned home, I struggled with what to do. Should I visit my neighbor, or pretend I knew nothing about her situation and go on with my day? In my mind I could see her sitting at her kitchen table, alone. She was in her fifties and the kids were grown.

Finally, I got up the courage and walked over to her house. When she opened her door, I said, “I heard through the grapevine that your husband left you last night. Can I do anything to help?”

Immediately, she burst into tears and said, “Come in. Come in.” I spent the entire morning with her – listening, putting my arm around her, and having coffee. But it was the start of a relationship.<sup>2</sup>

This kind of experience can be one that moves us away from gossip or being frustrated by a neighbour to learning about them, having conversations, building relationships, especially when we put their concerns ahead of our own for long enough to find out what their need is and how we might be present for them in that need.

But the story that Jesus shared went far beyond that. Here was a story of someone naked, beaten, unrecognizable, half dead, and left at the side of a dangerous road, known for how people could be robbed and taken advantage of. It was a road that one was wise to not travel alone.

Jesus says that two religious officials, one a priest and the other, with a little less authority than a priest, but still a knowledgeable and important member of the authoritative group of the Jewish faith, see the man on their respective travels and choose to pass by. Now I am pretty sure each did an assessment of the situation. They may have even felt badly that they were not taking time to tend to the man’s needs and I have read various reasons why each of them may have chosen to carry on, but the fact remains that they did not come near to help. They did not see this person as a neighbour.

Now the hearers of Jesus’ story would have been thinking, yup, first one didn’t help, the second didn’t help, but the hero is on his way. That is how stories work. So, they are waiting on the hero, but then the hero is someone from a group of people that these listeners have been disregarding and unhappy with for decades - along comes the Samaritan.

Samaritans were also Jewish, it was not like they were from some other faith, they just didn’t worship and do as those who were listening to this story did. One of *them* just couldn’t be the hero of the story. Please no! But Jesus wanting to drive home the point uses an unlikely hero who also would have assessed the situation and known the risks, and choose to act with mercy. It wasn’t that he was not concerned about his own safety, or the judgement he might receive at caring for such as this, or even wondered if he could afford to help with time, energy, and money, but decided that this is another human being in crisis and his own risk was outweighed by the need of the other.

And when you think of the man in crisis, he may have been grateful for the help, but he too may have wondered about his own safety with this stranger, whether or not being helped would by someone not like himself would put him in jeopardy in others

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<sup>2</sup> Larson, Craig Brian. *Leadership Journal. 750 Engaging Illustrations for Preacher, Teachers, and Writers*. Baker Books. Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1993, 1996, 1998. 2002. Page 379.

ways, but gives himself over to the person in order to receive the care he desperately needs.

Whenever we reach out to another or allow someone to help us, we put ourselves at risk. Sometimes it is an emotional risk, other times financial or physical. Risk is what is involved when we broaden our definition of what being a neighbour means. Did you catch that? Jesus took us and the religion scholar, as well as all those listening to the discussion, from the question of who is our neighbour to what being a neighbour means.

When we look around us, whether from the front doors of our homes, work, or churches, who is our neighbour in crisis? and what would it mean for us to be a neighbour to them? In a time when our politics are polarized and wars reign, where people are not accepted for their colour, their gender, their culture, or are fleeing from countries where hate and fear or famine are raging, who would Jesus say is our neighbour and how are we to be the neighbour?

I can't answer that question for you but you do need to ask it of yourself. Are you willing to risk anything to be a neighbour to someone in need? Are you will to advocate for justice, for healing, for food, for a home, for acceptance of those who are very different, even at odds with your way of thinking or being in the world?

Jesus' final question of the scholar was "What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?"

Which became a neighbor?"

The answer, the one who treated him kindly. The one who showed mercy. The one who chose risk.

Jesus said, "Go and do the same."

It is as simple and as complex as that. How much will you risk? This is not about being judged by another, it is about what you are willing to risk for God and for the neighbour. This risk will be what it is based on your physical, mental, emotion, and/or financial ability, but each of us has some ability to go beyond what who we are and what we are doing now to become a neighbour to someone in need.

May God grant you wisdom, courage, blessing, and grace as you go out into the world to show kindness, becoming a neighbour to those in need. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

God of abundant growth,  
as summer unfolds around us, we give you thanks for warm sunny days,  
for beauty in our gardens, crops growing in our fields,  
life swimming in oceans and lakes.  
Where the abundance of nature is at risk,

we pray that your Spirit will work in and through us  
to restore the air, water and soil for the good of all creation.

God of peace and reconciliation,  
we thank you for the peace and freedom we enjoy  
and the many ways our lives are protected in this land.  
We remember before you those places torn apart by violence and hatred,  
those people who face discrimination daily,  
and anyone who feels unsafe this day or any day.  
Inspire leaders in every country to lead with wisdom and mercy.  
Guide them in your ways of peace and justice.

God of creativity and community,  
we thank you for the many ways the Church can serve you in Jesus' name.  
Thank you for the unique voices that sing your praise and speak your comfort,  
all the hands that share in acts of service,  
all the prayers offered quietly for your will to be done.  
We pray for the Church and its many congregations as we seek to be faithful.  
Help us work together so that our unity bears witness  
to the possibilities for unity among diverse peoples everywhere.

God of every precious life,  
our hearts ache for those who are suffering.  
Hear our prayers as we name before you those in need of your love and healing  
in the silence of our hearts...

God hope and love, draw us closer to you every day.  
Show us what you desire for us and inspire our faithfulness in the example of Jesus,  
who taught us to pray these words:

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## Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

## Invitation to the offering

As a redeemed people, we live for giving thanks!  
We understand that everything we do and everything we have,  
comes from God, whose unconditional love lift us up each day.  
Let us continue our thanksgiving, with grateful hearts,  
by offering a blessing on the gifts given in response for what God has provided.

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**\*Hymn**

*When the poor ones*

**762**

1. When the poor ones who have nothing share with strangers,  
when the thirsty water give unto us all,  
when the crippled in their weakness strengthen others,

*Refrain*

*then we know that God still goes that road with us,  
then we know that God still goes that road with us.*

2. When at last all those who suffer find their comfort,  
when they hope though even hope seems hopelessness  
when we love though hate at times seems all around us,

*Refrain.*

3. When our joy fills up our cup to overflowing,  
when our lips can speak no words other than true,  
when we know that love for simple things is better,

*Refrain*

4. When our homes are filled with goodness in abundance,  
when we learn how to make peace instead of war,  
when each stranger that we meet is called a neighbour,

*Refrain*

"When the poor ones," words by Miguel Manzano, J.A. Olivar,  
English translation, George Lockwood © 1980, United Methodist Publishing House/Abingdon Press  
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**Benediction**

Now go, to be God's blessing to others.

**Stop measuring out your love by the spoonful,  
but shower everyone with it.**

Now go, to tell share the story of Jesus' love and hope for all.

**Go to speak of the One who, with grace and wonder,  
shows everyone who they are and who they might be.**

Now go, to pour out the Spirit's compassion in every corner of your life.

**Go to care for everyone, even those we do not know.**

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