



Series: Here, There & Everywhere (Part 2)

Speaker: Maureen Khoo

INTRODUCTION

This week, Pastor Maureen spoke on the 'neighbours' in our lives whom we are commanded to love. Neighbours we walk past daily without ever noticing they are there. Neighbours whom we see but never stop to ask about. Neighbours whom we know are in need but whom we treat as someone else's problem.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) illustrates that:

1. Jesus exposes hearts that limit love

The lawyer's motivation behind the question, 'Who is my neighbour?', misses the heart behind the commandment. He was looking to limit his love.

2. Jesus reveals the heart of God's Kingdom

None of the three passers-by had any issue seeing the injured man. Yet only the Samaritan had a different response. A response that flowed from a heart of compassion.

3. Jesus changes the question

Instead of answering the question, "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus asks, "Will you become a neighbour?" Will you choose to be a neighbour to others, despite the differences, the inconvenience, and the cost?

DISCUSSION

In the second week of the spiritual exercise regime proposed by St Ignatius of Loyola (c.1491-1556), he recommends prayerfully contemplating the life of Jesus by imaginatively entering the narrative scene that is described by the Bible. As we imagine ourselves in the text, the hope is that our attention is heightened to how we are affected by the Biblical story, so that we recognise what God might be saying to us through it in the here and now. Do not worry about receiving something; just focus on the story and let God move you as He wills.

And so, this is an exercise in imaginative reading for the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Before we begin,

- Find a comfortable position to be in, where you can pay attention
- Breathe a couple of times deeply
- Become aware of God's presence in the room with you

Let the group facilitator read the passage Luke 10:30:35 aloud slowly.

Pause for two seconds.

Read the passage again, and begin to imagine the scene - what might you see, hear, smell, or touch?

Have the group facilitator read the following prompts.

- Imagine yourself as the injured man who fell among robbers. Your earthly belongings were forcibly taken from you. To add insult to injury, you were stripped of your clothes and beaten. Robbed of both your possessions and dignity.
- In this trampling, see also the different sufferings you have endured in your life. Perhaps it is the injustices against you, when nothing seems fair, or the guilt and shame you carry for the hurt you've caused to others.
- You are left half dead; that is the fate you have to look forward to. You barely even notice the Priest and the Levite pass by without stopping. The pain is too great. Or if you do, it adds to the bitter taste. Yet in the midst of that pain, a stranger comes to your rescue.
- The stranger is gentle, cleaning your wounds with oil and water. He covers your nakedness and your wounds with his own clothes. He brings you to a safe space where you can rest.

- You look into the eyes of the stranger. Who do you see? Can you see Jesus in the Good Samaritan?

Pause for two seconds, then continue imagining yourself looking at the stranger. When you are ready, speak to him. Pray to him individually, speaking to him as a friend, before you return to the group. Share about your experience if you feel comfortable.

1. Consider that the transformation God wants to give us can only begin if we first see ourselves in the injured man whom Jesus chose to be His neighbour.

Is there a situation where you have been that injured man?

2. What does the Good Samaritan's compassion look like for you?

It is not the pity of someone thankful that they aren't the one suffering, or even empathy for what you are feeling. It is the heart of someone who wants to step in to bear your burdens with and for you.

3. As the injured man, have you allowed yourself to be nursed back to health?

Consider Matthew 11:28-30. What does Jesus' invitation look like in your situation?

4. True transformation of our heart towards our neighbours can come only when we see that we are the first beneficiaries of Jesus loving us as himself.

Would you be the Good Samaritan in whose eyes your neighbour will see Jesus?

What does that look like in your life today?

WHAT WILL YOU DO

Would you ask God to fill your heart with compassion for someone?

Perhaps this is a stranger whom you see but have never taken the time to know; a friend you have not spoken to in a while; or a lonely relative who could do with a visit.

Out of a heart of compassion, would you reach out today?

This can be as simple as a text to say you thought of them, a call to say I love you, or a catch-up over coffee.

MEMORY VERSE

And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself." - Luke 10:27 (ESV)

For further pondering:

The lawyer knew the Mosaic law so well that he was not only able to recite it, but synthesise two different commands from the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18). He understood that the vertical connection of loving God is inextricably linked to the horizontal connection of loving others. The test, as always, is how we live this out.