

# LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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**FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN  
ORDINARY TIME**

**10th July 2022**

**Luke 10:25** Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” **26** He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” **27** 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.” **28** And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

**Luke 10:29** But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” **30** Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. **31** Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. **32** So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. **34** He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. **35** The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ **36** Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” **37** He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

## THE GOOD SAMARITAN

It may be that we think that we know what the Good Samaritan is all about. Jesus uses it to tell us to be kind and compassionate but, as often happens with the scriptures, the real meaning only comes through when we consider it in context. The lawyer asking the question is more interested in word games than the truth and we must remember that it is to him that the story is addressed. His narrow and sectarian worldview is exposed as the person he thinks most unlikely to be a neighbour, the ritually unclean Samaritan, is the only who behaves in accordance with God’s will. The story is a call to examine our attitudes and our tendency to try and make God in our image and likeness, rather than let him restore his image and likeness in us.

**SEAN GOAN—*Let the Reader Understand, Year C***

## INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The first part of this story is found in Mark 12:28-31 (a scribe, with a positive view of the scribe) and in Matthew 22:34-40 (without the positive note about the lawyer). There are other differences. In Mark and Matthew, the question is “which is the greatest commandment?” This question is typical of rabbinic discussion, trying to summarise the heart of the Torah. In Luke, however, it becomes an existential question about how to live so as to attain eternal life. The reader may notice that the question set by the lawyer (who is my neighbour?) is turned around by the parable (how can I be neighbour?).

### Thought for the day

The question raised in today’s Gospel is never out of date or out of season. It is perfectly natural to think of our neighbours as literally the people next door, people “like us” as we say. But, that is to stay well within our comfort zone and, as Jesus puts it sharply elsewhere, “even the Gentiles love those who love them.” Far more is demanded, especially in today’s context of spiralling migration, with all its challenges of finance, housing, income, education of the young, work for the able and so forth. While bearing in mind the practical and social consequences, the whole thrust of the Gospel passage is to see my neighbour as any fellow human being in need.

**KIERAN O’MAHONY—[tarsus.ie](http://tarsus.ie)**

## MEDITATING ON THE PARABLE

The gospel text for the Sunday is taken mainly with the parable of the Good Samaritan, one of the most famous of all of Jesus' parables.

A familiar text like this one poses problems for meditation, however – we know it so well that we tend to take for granted what it will be saying to us. You must make an effort to come to it as if for the first time.

As with all parables, enter into the movement until you recognise the specific moment which you can identify with, and then allow that moment to reveal something to you about life, about your relationship with God, and the work of his grace.

It is a complex story, with many themes woven into it. There is the fact that a Samaritan is involved; the contrast between him and the priest and Levite (vs.31 and 32); the double aspect of his response – compassion on the one hand (vs.33) and very practical steps on the other (vs. 34 and 35).

Understand where the priest and the Levite were coming from. According to Jewish law, touching a dead body made a person unclean (Numbers 19:11-13). If the man happened to be dead, the priest and the Levite, who were on their way to the temple in Jerusalem, could not have officiated at the temple; therefore they could not take the risk of helping the man.

The parable is set within a dialogue between Jesus and a lawyer (vs. 25 to 29, and 36 to 37). Feel free to focus on this dialogue, identifying with Jesus, the ideal spiritual guide, or with the lawyer, symbol of all of us when we come to God (or to people) seeking to justify ourselves.

**MICHEL DE VERTEUIL**—*Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels, Year C*

The emphasis in this parable is on compassion and action. Jesus points to a God who is not concerned about the boundaries we create, but who is on the streets with the injured, offering healing and mercy. The lawyer's question is about what limits are to be placed on neighbourly love. Jesus tells us that there are no limits in God's eyes. Holiness is not in separating oneself from the injured, but in coming close to those in need.

“Our prayer, our worship, our fasting  
are of little value to God  
if we have ignored those of God's children  
who suffer on the margins of our societies.  
We are Christians who follow the message of Jesus,  
not because we say “Lord, Lord’ ...  
It is in our compassion that we imitate  
God who is compassion.” (Peter McVerry SJ)

*Who are those ‘half dead’ in our society today? How can we be neighbours to them?*

*We are so familiar with the phrase ‘Good Samaritan’ that this parable has almost lost its punch. The Samaritan was considered an enemy in Jesus’ time. How might this story be told today? When has an ‘enemy’ helped you?*

**TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT**—Go Deeper

## POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Today's gospel brings us right to the heart of what a Christian life involves: love of God and love of neighbour. Jesus tells us that having life both now and in the future is the fruit of living in a spirit of love. How have you experienced love given and received as a source of life and vitality?
2. With media today we are brought face to face with suffering, poverty and hunger so vast that it can engender a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. The parable challenges us about how we react when we come face to face with a person in need. We may sometimes try to avoid getting involved. Recall when you overcame this reaction and reached out to help. What did that do for you, and for the other person?
3. In *The Joy of the Gospel* Pope Francis comments that it is a temptation for some religious people to claim they are too busy to get involved with the poor and says “none of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice.” Who are the people whose commitment to these causes inspire you.

**JOHN BYRNE**—*Intercom*

## REFLECTION

In order not to lose face in an exchange with Jesus, a teacher of the law ends up asking “*and who is my neighbour?*”, a question only a man concerned about fulfilling the law, would ask. He wants to know whom he should love or exclude from his love. He has no thought for the suffering of people.

Jesus' concern is to alleviate the sufferings of those he meets wherever he goes, breaking, if necessary, the law of the Sabbath or the rules of ritual purity. He answers him with a story vehemently denouncing every kind of religious legalism that exempts one from loving service to those who need it....

The priest going down the road passes by. It isn't his job to come to the aid of victims left by the roadside. His work place is in the temple, the sacred liturgy his duty. His lack of compassion is not only a personal reaction, because a Levite of the temple who passes by does the same thing. It is, more precisely, an attitude and a risk run by those engaged in the world of the sacred to live far removed from the real world in which people struggle, work and suffer.

When religion is not centred on a God who is a lover of life and Father of those who suffer, sacred worship can become an experience that alienates it from secular life and shields it from direct contact with the sufferings of people. According to Jesus, it is not those who conduct religious services but those with compassionate hearts who can best show us how to deal with people who suffer. *Go and do likewise.*

**JOSÉ A PAGOLA**—*Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year C*