

Who is my Neighbour?



*Giffnock:
the Park
Church*

*Sunday 26th
July 2020*

*A Time
for Reflection*

Good Morning everyone,

I trust you are all keeping well at the moment and that we are coping not just with the changes in the weather but also the most recent changes in relation to coping with the current health crisis affecting us all. Life goes on and the things of life continue. That was something that came home to me all the more so when I received the news that my old minister at North Kelvinside, the Rev Bill Alston, who saw out his childhood here in Giffnock died only yesterday having been one of Glasgow Presbytery's longest serving ministers. His wife Margaret had died earlier this year and Bill had taken ill a number of weeks ago. My good friend and best man sent me word to say that he had been "Called Home" which I thought was a lovely way to put it.

As I took a few moments to think back on my time growing up in the fellowship at North Kelvinside, I realised there have been a number of individuals over the years that have been pivotal in me becoming the person I am today. Bill Alston as my minister then was one of these individuals who over the years through the constancy of his teaching and the example of his life left an indelible mark on my approach to things. I look back and see how he and others in the congregation mentored the wee boy who came through Sunday School and Bible Class eventually making his Profession of Faith and latterly following through a Call to the Ordained Ministry. My thoughts for reflection today were initially to focus on a reading from the Old Testament but the news of Bill's Death and reflection on his life's work has prompted me to think again of the importance of being a Mentor to others in the way that Jesus taught in the parable of the good Samaritan. The Good Works we do in of themselves are not what guarantees our salvation in God's Eyes of course but living out of our faith and whatever we may do for our neighbour (whomever our neighbour may be) is a means by which we demonstrate God's love in action to those round about as an outworking of our Faith which prompts us.

So to that end I hope this morning's reflection of the Good Samaritan is a timely reminder that the lives we lead and how we live them are an important part of Christian Witness to a broken world that needs the light of Jesus shining upon them now more than ever before.

As always I hope you will fare well in these coming days especially those who have been shielding for so long who may finally be able to get out and about again at some point soon. Be safe as always and as we give thanks for another week past and look forward to the week ahead, may we all know His Eternal presence and peace through it all.

With best wishes from all at the manse

Calum D. Macdonald

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Each time, before you intercede, be quiet first, and worship God in His glory. Think of what He can do, and how He delights to hear the prayers of His redeemed people. Think of your place and privilege in Christ, and expect great things!

Andrew Murray

(Our Prayer today is an adaptation of a Prayer written by Debbie McDaniel)

Our Gracious God and Father as we come to end of one week and the beginning of another we come to thank You again and express our Love for you and devotion to you, recognising yet again you are the maker of the heavens and the earth eternal and constant, who sustains all life through its time Hear us now as we pray to you seeking your blessing once more upon us through these difficult days.

As we think of the week that has past and the week to come we recognise that need you now more than ever. We ask that you would direct our hearts and minds towards you, and fill us with your Spirit, bringing refreshing, renewal, peace, and joy. Remind us through your word that you are faithful to carry our burdens, that you will renew our strength, and that you promise to give us rest as we come to you.

Forgive us for the times we have worked so hard to be self-sufficient, forgetting our need for you, living independently of your Spirit. Forgive us for letting fear and worry control our minds and for allowing pride and selfishness to wreak havoc over our lives. Forgive us for not following your ways and for living life distant from your presence. We thank You that your ways are far greater than our ways and your thoughts far deeper than our thoughts. Thank you that you had a plan to redeem us and that you make all things new. Thank you that your face is towards the righteous, you are close to the broken-hearted, that you hear our prayers, and know our hearts. Thank you for your daily, powerful presence in our lives, that we can be

assured, no matter what we're facing, your heart is towards us, your eyes are over us, and your ears are open to our prayers. Thank you that you surround us with your Love, and we are safe in your care.

We give you praise and honour for your ways are righteous and true. We Worship you for you are holy and just. We will declare that your love stands firm forever and that your loving kindness endures forever.

Help us never to take for granted this huge gift of love you have offered on our behalf. Help us to be reminded of the cost of it all. Forgive us for being too busy or distracted by other things, for not fully recognizing what you've so freely given, and all that Christ has done for us. Help us to cease striving and to remember again that you alone are God. We choose to press in close to you today and to keep you first in our hearts and lives. May we walk in your wisdom and purposes, may we stay strong and true to you.

We pray for your protection over our lives, our families, and other believers. We ask for your hand to cover us and keep us distanced from the evil intent of the enemy - that you would be a barrier over us and that we would find refuge in you. We pray that you would give us discernment and insight beyond our years to understand your will, hear your voice, and know your ways.

We ask that you would keep our footsteps firm on solid ground, helping us to be consistent and faithful. Give us supernatural endurance to stay the course, not swerving to the right or to the left, or being too easily distracted by other things that would seek to call us away from a close walk with you.

*Shine your light in us, through us, and over us. May we make a difference in this world for your glory so that your purposes stand for all to see. May we reflect your peace and hope to a world that so desperately needs your presence and healing. So to that end be with us as your People Serving Others in Christ's name reflecting your love always in Faith and in service
This we pray in Jesus' name ... Amen.*

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Luke 10 : 25 - 37

(New International Version)

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’^[c]; and, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’^[d]”

²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii^[e] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

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In this morning's reflection we will once again look at what is possibly one of the most well known parables taught by Jesus. It has been the subject of countless sermons over not just the years or decades but the centuries. Some of the parables are common to all of the Synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). The parable of the Good Samaritan however is unique to Luke's Gospel account of Jesus' time with the disciples. Why did Luke include this in his version of the Gospels? If I was to speculate on this, it would be to suggest that maybe Luke recognised the importance in Christian Faith "going the extra mile", where the teaching of Jesus sits at the centre of the thought here. It's an everyday expression people today will use probably not realising that the principle behind the expression was one that Jesus had established. I suspect that Luke having heard the stories told of Jesus before anything was written about Him was also aware of the events unfolding in the early church as Paul the Apostle also come into prominence. If you read the gospel of Luke in conjunction with the Book of Acts you will see that Luke really wrote a story in two volumes, the first volume being, the life of Jesus, the second being the birth of the church. In Acts we read of How Barnabas went the extra mile that no-one else would when Saul who later became known as Paul, having met Jesus on the Damascus Road, sought to join the church but there was no-one who would trust him except Barnabas (Acts 9:26-27). It was his standing alongside Paul that admitted him to the fellowship of the church. It was Barnabas who later in the Story of the book of Acts would stand up to Paul on behalf of Mark and eventually left Paul to go with Mark. (Acts 15: 36-39). Paul would realise the wisdom of Barnabas' when he wrote to a letter to Timothy much later on seeking that John Mark

joins him much later on in his missionary Journey (2 Timothy 4:11) someone reflected on this, remarking on these things,

“Why did Barnabas take a chance on Mark? Once again, as he did for Paul before the Apostles, Barnabas is willing to stick his neck on the line for his brother. He seemed to have the ability, or gift, to see something in people that others did not. He saw qualities in them that if patiently and lovingly encouraged, the Lord could use to reach lost souls. He saw Godly value in those who were written off by so many. Barnabas showed he loved through his hope and belief in God's ability to transform anyone into a person more like Christ.”

I think this sets the tone for the story of the Good Samaritan being included in Luke's Gospel. If we understand this idea of the Christian coming alongside and mentoring by life and by example, we see a remarkable opportunity for all of us to have a part to play in terms of Christian Witness, possibly like Barnabas seeing the potential of someone in ways that others cannot find and are therefore not prepared to 'go the extra mile'. There are two stories I would want to share with you that I think highlight how Christian life and living is pivotal in affecting and introducing people to the risen Saviour.

Our first story tells of the life of Fred Douglas Shepard who was born on September 11, 1855 in New York. His father died while he was very young and his mother spent most of her adult life as an invalid. It was probably through this that Fred became associated with illness and caring for the sick. Fred by this time had moved with the family to Madrid a town on the US and Canadian Border. It was there in a revival meeting in a Baptist church that he became a Christian and threw himself completely into the Christian life. At the age of 22 he began his studies in medicine and at 27 married a young lady who was also a doctor. They felt a calling and turned their faces towards the east ... Eastern Turkey to be exact.

The Shepards spent the remaining days of their lives in Eastern Turkey. He started a school of medicine and 221 men graduated from there to aid in the treatment of the terrible disease and suffering rampant throughout the country at the time. His records show that by 1914, (at the age of 59) he had seen 6000 patients in his clinic, called on others in over 2000 homes, and had only 800 paying patients.

Shepard's service was so significant that he received decorations from the Red Cross and President Taft in 1909 and from the Sultan of Turkey in

1911. The Sultan said, "The decoration bestowed upon you is nothing compared with your most admiring sympathy shown to the suffering of humanity."

In 1908 the largest Protestant church in Turkey held a silver anniversary of Fred Shepard's ministry there. It was filled with Moslems, Catholics, Gregorians, and Jews as well as Protestants. For two hours these folks stood and talked about what Dr. Shepard had done for them. **While reflecting over his ministry he said that the celebration was really not about him but about one even greater; God and His love.** He said, *"Because I have understood a little about that love, I try to let others know about it. This is my purpose in life. I did not come to this country to make money or a reputation. I came to bear witness that God is love. If by my work I have been able to show him to You, I have had my reward and I thank him."*

This 5' 4" husky farm lad brought relief to an entire country in an era when disease ran rampant. This is truly a story for our time where he was dealing with a health crisis of huge proportions, dealing with those across multi-cultural and national boundaries - all the while remaining true to his Faith in Jesus.

Fred Shepard in his understanding of what it means to: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' understood better than the lawyer in Jesus' day the answer to what Bible Scholars have referred to as - the Lawyer's Question.

Our second story concerns one of my colleagues, a young lady at the time studying Theology at Edinburgh University, training as a candidate for the Church of Scotland Ordained Ministry. She told me of the time that she was cycling along Princes Street in Edinburgh when she hit a pot hole and fell off the bike, badly hurting her leg. She couldn't stand on it and literally crawled off the road and leaned against the railing on the pavement massaging the pain in her leg. A taxi Driver briefly stopped and shouted from the Cab window, "Haw Lass - you'll need to move that bike, your causin' an obstruction on the road." before driving off. There were many pedestrians on Princes Street that day, all of whom passed her by, saying nothing to her, merely passing by her. Years later she remarked, that would never have happened in Glasgow because people there would have been over to help in a jiffy but she then went on to say that although they would have been over to help they might also have been helping themselves to your purse at the same time.

Now I tell that story not to take a pop at the good folk of Edinburgh because while some might fit the stereotype there will many more who do not in the same way that folk in Glasgow don't fit the stereotype feigning assistance all the while working how they might rob you. I tell that story because it resonates very well with the story of the Good Samaritan and is contemporary in its setting.

In Street Pastors there is often a reference made to having the eyes, the hands and the feet of Jesus, walking to those who are the most vulnerable, regardless of their colour, creed, faith or whatever else might disenfranchise them, to offer any help we can, to speak with and listen to those who everyone else will step over, to see from Jesus' perspective the brokenness of humanity and its deepest needs of God's love at the heart of it all, a love that can offer contentment and peace in life, that can bring hope to a hopeless situation, that can lift the broken spirit and make it whole again.

Fred Shepard understood that through his ministry in Eastern Turkey. Today the Church has an opportunity to be the Good Samaritan to a world that is lost in the desires of materialism, the false Gods of Vanity, Wealth, Fame and Power. The Faith in Jesus, the Hope and Love of God spoken of in 1 Corinthians 13 has far more to offer than any of the above. Jesus understood that all too well when asked by a clever lawyer trying to trip Him up. He answered the question of who his neighbour was leaving no doubt. The answer to the question remains the same today as it did then. May we all be a Samaritan to someone at some time in our lives and go the extra mile to show our Faith in Action, demonstrating God's love not just for you and me but for all whom we come in contact with regardless of background or circumstance, those of faith, of different faith or of no faith. Like Fred Shepard, it is our purpose in life. We are not here to make money or a reputation. We are here to bear witness that God is love and if by our work we have been able to show Him to others, We have had our reward and we can thank Him."

With Best Wishes

Calum D. Macdonald



In Life, remember.

By Faith, we Live.

By Love, we Serve.

By Patience, we Understand.

By Trials, we gain wisdom.

By Sharing, we give Joy.

May we know the Blessing of

The Father Who loves us

The Son who gave himself for us

The Spirit Who Walks alongside us

Who goes before

Who comes behind us

Who Dwells within us

Now and always