

*Worship sheet for 13 July 2025
prepared by the Revd W John Young*

Call to worship. Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Hymn StF 516 HaP 47

1 What shall I do my God to love,
My Saviour, and the world's, to praise?
Whose tenderest compassions move
To me and all the fallen race,
Whose mercy is divinely free
For all the fallen race, and me!

2 I long to know, and to make known,
The heights and depths of love divine,
The kindness thou to me hast shown,
Whose every sin was counted thine:
My God for me resigned his breath;
He died to save my soul from death.

3 How shall I thank thee for the grace
On me and all mankind bestowed?
O that my every breath were praise!
O that my heart were filled with God!
My heart would then with love o'erflow,
And all my life thy glory show.

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

Prayer of worship and confession

We are lost in wonder before you,
amazing God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Creator, Saviour, Teacher and fellow
traveller on the road of life. Forgive us that
we miss the signs of your living presence in
the world around us, in the people we meet
and events where grace and love appears.
Please open our spirits to welcome and
know you so that we express the love you
show us. Amen.

Reading Luke 10: 25-37

Reflection

The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of Jesus' most famous parables and was given when a lawyer asked a test question.

Jesus replied with another question and agreed with the lawyer's answer. OK, the

lawyer should have stopped there but he wanted his piece of the action and it's a good job he did because we have this parable, described by NT Wright as 'one of the most brilliant miniature stories ever composed'.

Jesus used a 3-person story, a technique we still have. Any combination of three people who do or say something. Two of them do their bit and the third person often comes up with something silly.

In Jesus' day the 3-person story involved a priest and a Levite. They would fail to do what they were supposed to do. In Jesus' version the priest and the Levite saw a victim of robbery but left him half dead (or half alive) and went on their way. Everybody knew who would be next up, an ordinary Jewish person, but shock horror, Jesus changed the story. The hero was a Samaritan, the last person anybody listening would expect.

Jews and Samaritans were neighbours with many similar beliefs but like some neighbouring villages or football teams there was a longstanding hateful feud. (see Lk 9:51-56 and John ch 4:9).

What is going on? The hero is a Samaritan! Jesus, you can't be serious! But he was and of course interpreters update it with our most despised person, the good XY or Z. Whatever, but in Jesus' time making a Samaritan the hero was truly shocking.

Jesus didn't answer the lawyer's question 'who is my neighbour?'. Instead, he told the parable. The Samaritan saw, had compassion, gave first aid, lent his transport, took the victim to a Samaritan unfriendly place (a Jewish inn) and paid for his keep. Jesus made his point, the foreigner did the right thing when the others didn't. It highlights mercy, compassion, and helping victims and I hope that we follow by

encouraging All we Can, Christian Aid, Hospice Care etc etc.

It's all there, but Jesus added another question, '10³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?'. Professor Catchpole calls it a 'notably subtle parable' and it is. The neighbour is not someone else but you or me. It is about being a good neighbour so let's look a bit closer.

The commandments which Jesus approved heartily were to love God and love your neighbour as yourself. Simple but not so simple.

To be good neighbours to others we must be good neighbours to ourselves.

I always thought it was wrong to love oneself, indeed Jesus said that we should deny ourselves. He did, and some people and perhaps us, think it means beating ourselves up and depriving ourselves of all but the most essential. However, when Jesus said that we should deny ourselves he didn't mean the obliteration of self, it's rather that we should stop selfishness and egotism and find our true selves by sharing our lives with God and other people. Love your neighbour as you love yourself, not as you hate yourself.

Being good neighbours to ourselves means caring for ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually. We look after our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and love the Lord with all our strength, we exercise our minds by lifelong learning and careful thought and love the Lord with all our minds. We build up our emotional life with humour, music, empathy ... and love the Lord with all our hearts. We open our souls, our whole persons to God and draw on the spiritual resources that God has given us in the Bible, worship, prayer and fellowship.

Love to God comes from God's love to us, an everlasting love, a love in Christ from which we cannot be separated.

That is the love which we experience in Christ and project onto other people. It will lead us to appropriate words and deeds but also allows other people to be good neighbours. Sometimes we have to ask for help, and that encourages helpers, carers, advisors to be good neighbours. My biggest criticism of generous, hospitable Christians who give and give and give again is that so often they don't allow anyone to help them or give to them. They are stopping others from being good neighbours. Let the carers, advisors, mentors, helpers be good neighbours. Encourage and affirm them, not reject them and so be good neighbours even if our situation of health or skill limits what we can do..

Who is my neighbour? was the lawyer's question but Jesus asks 'who are we neighbours to?'

Prayer

We pray for people on journeys, families going on holiday, refugees, students looking for to fresh studies...

We pray for people whose living is transporting people and goods by car, lorry, bus, aircraft or ship.

We pray for people in difficult places on life's journey, stopped by violence, abuse, illness, accidents, loss...

We pray that those who struggle may have fresh heart. We pray that those who care may have compassion and skill. Help us to love you, our neighbours and ourselves. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn StG 685 HaP 758

- 1 In Christ there is no east or west,
in him no south or north,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.
- 2 In him shall true hearts

everywhere their high communion find;
his service is the golden cord
close-binding humankind.

3 Join hands then all the human race,
whate'er your nation be;
all children of the living God
are surely kin to me.

4 In Christ now meet both east and
west,
in him meet south and north;
all Christlike souls are one in him,
throughout the whole wide earth

John Oxenham, pseud. (1852–1941)

Blessing

Above all, clothe yourselves with love,
which binds everything together in perfect
harmony. (Col 3:14)