

**Sunday, July 10<sup>th</sup> 2022. Trinity 4**

**Deuteronomy 30.9-14, Psalm 25.1-10, Luke 10.25-37**

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

There have been allegations about racism in recent months, first in cricket and more recently in rugby. It all raises the question of how we treat other people, how welcoming we are and how we behave towards people from other countries and cultures.

In the first reading from Deuteronomy, there is an unusual claim about the law, characterising it as being very close, in your mind and in your heart, instead of being puzzling or remote. God has not left his will in doubt, and he exhorts the people to choose life by following his easy and gentle commandments.

In Psalm 25, the cause of the psalmist's lamentation is the violent attack of enemies, who have isolated him and plunged him into loneliness and despair. He wonders if he is being punished for his recent sins and those of his past. But he can approach God, who has revealed himself in Israel's history as a God, who pardons sinners, saves the afflicted and removes barriers:

'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.'

He will worship God, trust only in him and wait for divine help.

The famous story of the good Samaritan appears only in Luke's Gospel. For Luke, the question concerns eternal life. Keeping the law was essential to eternal life. It was an OT concept, as we saw in Deuteronomy.

Interestingly, Luke had the lawyer, rather than Jesus, answer the question of what is written in the law, perhaps to justify himself in such a way as to escape the demands of the law. He therefore asks the question 'Who is my neighbour?'

This leads to the parable of the good Samaritan, the meaning of which is clear.

A man is attacked on the way to Jericho, but a priest and a Levite, who represent the religious leaders, go past. It isn't stated why they go past, but if they assumed that the man was dead, if they touched the dead body, they would be unclean and unable to minister to others. They are keeping the law, but they don't come out of it very well, and it is the hated Samaritan, who goes beyond the call of duty to minister to the man.

Then Jesus asks a question, 'Which of these proved to be a neighbour?'

The question of the lawyer was, 'Who is my neighbour?' but the question of the parable is, 'Who acted like a neighbour?'

We must not escape the demands of the law by asking 'Who?' but respond to God's command by seeking how. The command is clear; show love to those, who need it.

The parable shows that everyone is our neighbour and needs our care and compassion, and it challenges our attitude to people in our own society. How accepting are we of people, who come from other countries and cultures? Are we welcoming?

Do we sometimes become hung up on rules, like that priest and Levite and fail to give help when it is needed?

If I saw an accident on the way from Aylesbury, would I say, 'Can't stop. I have a service to take?' It's not easy, and sometimes we are faced with a dilemma.

The parable raises questions about how we treat other people and whether we are prejudiced or unjust. The parable seems easy, but it challenges us to look at the way we behave and to consider how it matches what we hear about God in Psalm 25 and elsewhere.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.