

Love your neighbor

Our Bible, Luke 10:23-37

Then turning to the disciples Jesus said privately,

"Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" 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 neighbor as yourself."

And Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

But the lawyer, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'"

Jesus asked the lawyer

"Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"

The lawyer said

"The one who showed him mercy."

And Jesus said to him

"You go, and do likewise."

The human being came towards me
dragging heavily
with a slimy path
of lies, of festering wounds.
A voice clanged

"Do you love the human being?"

"No", I said, "I cannot".

"Love", the voice said.



The human being came
closer, creeping
drooling with desire
with flies and parasites
in it's rotting belly.
And the voice hammered
"Do you love the human being?"
"No", I said.,
"Love", the voice said.

Closer - slowly closer
inch by inch
the stench worsened
of the thousand sicknesses of lies
and the voice threatened
"Do you love the human being?"
"No, I do not love", I said.,
"Love", the voice said.

2



How much bother
is a human
being worth?
Many decades ago
a ferry sank
in a fjord
in North Jutland
in Denmark
and the loss
was declared:
"8 cows
were lost
- and a few
peasants".
Apparently,
at the time,
the value
of a cow
were considered
higher than
that of a peasant.

In our Bible text, Jesus bids a high price on a flock of insignificant fishermen, peasants and craftsmen plus the joining crowds from the side alleys.

"You are blessed"

Jesus said and he even valued his flock above kings and prophets.



The reaction came swiftly.

3

A lawyer made his way forward to discuss the value of a human being, claiming that according to God's law, no one is worthy of more than one has earned in the eyes of God and other people. At first it seems like Jesus goes along with the lawyer's thinking, and so, Jesus demands that the lawyer obeys the commandment to love, but the lawyer shys away by asking

"Who is my neighbor?" "To whom do I owe the bother of love?"

Basically this was a good question, to which there was no agreed answer. The Pharisees had a tendency to exclude all non-Pharisees, others required that all heretics and sinners could be written off, and finally, at least personal enemies had to be excepted from the commandment to love your neighbor.

Furthermore the tension between religion and politics did not make the case easier, not then, not today.



With his story, Jesus manifests that the law of **love will not be limited or suspended**.

The law of love is unlimited and when the story shows that the law of love does not lead to the desired outcome, well, then it's not a fault in the law, but the human being, that is the cause of this.

We humans do, regretfully, have an incredible ability to shut life out, so that the people we meet do not become our destiny and our responsibility. We simply do not see them. It is indeed possible to live a long and hectic life without ever being alive and present in it.



In the cartoon Charlie Brown is looking over a wall and his friend asks

"What are you doing here?"

Charlie answers

"Nothing special, I just wanted to stand here to see life pass - but it has not turned up yet."

You do not meet life if not in a body. This was why the Samaritan in Jesus's story only found his neighbor when he met somebody who needed him.

And the man who was attacked by robbers and was in deep trouble, in return, only found his neighbor, when he met the person, who rescued him.

So, we are each other's neighbor, and as Jesus holds us to account for how we treat each other, we, in the same way get our hands full and become less confident in our selfmade ruleset.



For, what can we say at the end in the last second when we stand face to face with him, who no one can imagine the one, who cannot be measured or embraced in the endlessness of time

He, who was love without limits

What shall we answer when we are asked about the things we, in his name, did not do? Shall we say that we did not know that we could not hear the broken heart's beating millions and millions in lonely rooms, streets and in prisons and in bars?

Shall we bring forward explanations about
that we thought it was about
erecting buildings
and maintain them to his honour
that we were occupied by
sorting hymns and prayers
and that things were done correctly
responsibly?

Or, shall we say this?
that we were afraid
that we made sure we were busy
with all these things
to shy getting to stand facing
what he had planned for us
and which would bring us to salvation
that is was fear that made us keep
ourselves hidden when he passed?

5

Do you love the human being?
How much bother is a human worth?

Then the human being rose and reached
the hands towards me
and see, the wounds of the nails bled red
to the shoulder the naked arms
where covered in the black wounds of sin
and the human being laughed: **So, God has loved!**
A the blindfold fell from my eyes
and I shouted: **"Human, I love you."**
although my mouth was filled with blood
with the blood of humans.



Because God has bothered with us, so he became our neighbor, who gave us his charity,
we know, how much bother a human is worth, and that life only reaches us where and when
we, ourselves, seek to **pass the love on, which we are given for nothing.**