

Year C Sermon Proper 10

Sometimes I wonder how complicated life and the Church can be – I mean there are many different churches, different denominations, and different ways of doing things – some more sacramental, some less so. Some Churches wrapped up in hierarchy, and at one level we may think that whether you are a newcomer to Church or indeed a returner – God does not make things very easy for us?

And yet if you read our readings today, all three of them seem to suggest that what God requires of us is devastatingly simple.

If you strip away everything, in Deuteronomy it says simply “return to the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your strength”. The implication behind this is that God is not far away. The part we play is simply one of movement, turning to face God.

In our Gospel reading, we find that the lawyer was testing Jesus with a standard question, for which there was an agreed answer which was required for theological correctness. *What must I do to inherit eternal life?* – and the gist of the was one backed by scripture going back to Leviticus. *“Love God and Love your neighbour as yourself”*. Because Jesus had escaped that one by affirming the standard agreed answer, the lawyer must now push him further with his next question. “And who is my neighbour?” he asks.

In his response Jesus makes the point crystal clear, that “The one who showed him mercy” – “Go and do likewise” – that choosing God means choosing people. Choosing God means choosing anyone who needs you. No excuses.

Indeed it is also interesting that in Jesus’ answer his story of the man who fell among thieves and found his neighbour to be the one who helped him – is also a clear message to Church goers today. Love for God and neighbour is not achieved by simply declaring that love exists. Many of you may remember the musical *My Fair Lady* when Eliza Doolittle says “*Don’t talk of love, show me!*”. And that is what we must do.

Deuteronomy and the good Samaritan make it all sound so very simple. But unfortunately we know that it is not. All of us at times can be like the lawyer – looking for complicated ways to let ourselves off the hook, or like the people in Deuteronomy, who would say “It’s all too difficult, we need someone in heaven, or at least abroad, to explain it to us. Its not our fault that we do not know what to do” –

But the point is that it is so simple – on Friday on the A18 I got stuck in a long traffic jam, because a young lad and his girlfriend had gone off the road and into the ditch – indeed travelling so fast they travelled over 100 yards along the 8 foot ditch trying to stop. After they had been pulled out of the car, I waited with some other people as the emergency services were called. In away, we were pretty helpless, as we waited ther with him- he needed urgent medical attention – but we stayed with him, keeping him calm and still until help came. We did not know who he was, or anything about him – but even then a few people turned round in their car and headed back. Behavioural psychologists call this *the bystander effect*. Many of you were shocked as indeed I was at the CCTV of Charles Satchi

grabbing Nigella Lawson the celebrity chef, by the throat while he shouted at her. It was recorded by a large number of people on mobile phones, and put on U tube in minutes. In such circumstances it is very difficult sometimes to get involved, yet we are led to believe that nobody intervened to do anything about it – except film it. I cannot believe that none of the many hurrying past would claim to respect the teaching of Jesus.

Luckily we have the witness of many generations of people that making the choice is the vital thing to do. Choosing God, over and over again, however many times our other choices get in the way, is the best we can do. In Colossians Paul writes with great warmth and generosity and trust to this community of people, who despite their imperfections have chosen God. If I had been a Colossian, then to receive that letter would have been very encouraging to know that Paul knows and supports how we care for each other, that the Gospel is alive and well and bearing fruit.

The key is that we do not do this by ourselves. The strength that enables us to live rightly comes from God. God swings into action at the end of today's reading, like superman to the rescue. And it does not matter how old we are. Each week I go into to Kidgate Primary to deliver an assembly. Last week we were talking about superheros, the incredibles, Batman, Eugio, and Spiderman, – that we all need a superhero, and that Jesus is if you like the ultimate superhero!

God rescues us from the darkness, God chooses us, as we are, useless and sinful. This great choice that we thought we had to make, reaching out in our strength, turning round with great effort to face him, is nothing of the kind. There is no journey to be made – he is here. There is no huge decision to take – we are already part of the kingdom of the son. All we have to do is say “thank you”. It is really that simple.