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Christ Church New Southgate
& Friern Barnet

Sermon: Stories of Justice – helping a stranger

Rev. Ruth Moriarty

Reading: Luke 10.25-37

During the protests after George Floyd died one of the most powerful images was captured at a protest. Here we see Patrick Hutchinson and Bryn Male. Both men had chosen to attend the protests but for different reasons. Bryn to protect statues that were being vandalised and Patrick and his friends to protect young black people from getting into trouble.

In the image we see Bryn injured from a fight broken out on the Southbank being carried on the shoulder of Patrick. The image could not be starker. Patrick is black, enormously strong, fit, composed and surrounded by his friends. Bryn is white, vulnerable, injured, weak, and alone. Patrick is a personal trainer interested in supporting young black people, Bryn is an ex-police officer, a Millwall football club fan and described as a patriotic brit by his friends. The men are also complete strangers. Patrick lifts Bryn from the pavement and with the assistance of Patrick's friends he is carried to safety.

The good Samaritan is also in a position of power. He has medical supplies, he has a donkey and enough physical strength to lift a dying man onto his donkey. He chooses to use his power to help a stranger, a stranger from a different race, a different religion, someone who was weak, vulnerable, injured and alone.

Jesus tells the parable of the good Samaritan to a lawyer trying to catch him out. The lawyer tries to justify himself by asking Jesus who is my neighbour? Who is it that I really have to love? Does 'love your neighbour as yourself' really mean that person I do not like or know?

Patrick reflecting on the image in a recent interview told the Guardian, 'I hope it will change the minds of those who are sitting on the fence about this whole thing. I hope it can galvanise us as human beings and bring us together.'

As the good Samaritan scoops the injured man up, he offers a corrective to the religious people of the day, someone from outside their faith has been

more faithful to God's law. Where are the challenges likewise to the church today? Are there areas of justice that we avoid and cross the road from? As the Samaritan bends down to lift the man up, we also see a reflection of Christ. As Christ chooses to come to earth to lift us up towards God. As Christ bends to wash his disciples' feet, as Christ serves a hurting world and lifts up every vulnerable, weak and injured person he meets from his position in glory. Jesus Christ is able to lift each of us up, from our injuries, weakness and vulnerabilities. He is able to heal us, to restore us and chooses to do so.

The good Samaritan lifts up the injured man, but he doesn't say anything in the parable till he arrives at the inn. Inns were notorious places in biblical times. This isn't a boutique B&B on the edge of the Cotswolds, this is an inn in bandit country on a rough road. Think wild west inn, with a few beds on the upper wooden deck.

And it is in this place, he says 'I'll pay'. I'll pay for this nobody, this person who has been beaten, has been stripped, and was left to die outside the holy city. I'll pay for his healing, his restoration, his wholeness, and I entrust him to you – with every chance you might rip me off, and I'll come back and see him well.

In his words we see a glimpse of the compassion of Christ, who also was beaten, stripped, and left to die outside the holy city. This Jesus paid for our healing, our restoration, our wholeness and it was costly, dangerous and risky.

When we hear the voice of the Samaritan say I'll pay, we hear a voice that is different, a voice that is not asking who exactly is my neighbour? Or do I really have to care about those johnny-come-lately's? We hear 'I'll pay'.

We hear an outcast of polite religious society, a non-Jew, a merchant, a man who was not born to greatness but had to work at it show us all how to live. In every marginal voice, God's prophetic voice can be found.

A voice like the Samaritans that calls us to participate in kindness, in God's faithfulness, in his covenant-relationship. A voice that calls us to the most costly of loves, one that calls us to the feet of Christ himself. May we hear God speaking through others, and may we be prepared to offer God's love to others as the Spirit leads us.