

A sermon preached by the Revd Martin Tanner in St Mary's Church,
Market Drayton at 8.30am on Sunday 24 August 2016

(Trinity 13)

LUKE 10 v23-37

"Now which of these was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves?" said Jesus and the Lawyer replied, "**He that shewed MERCY on him.**" And Jesus (v37) said, "Go and do thou likewise."

One of the great words of the Bible is the word MERCY.

And it is "mercy" that we are bidden to show to others. It's one of the hallmarks of a true Christian.

But what IS 'mercy'?

The great OT word for mercy is *HESED* which occurs nearly 250 times and is often translated as "steadfast love" and describes God's covenant love, or faithfulness, to Israel **DESPITE** Israel's unworthiness. Despite Israel's frequent rebellion, God remains merciful.

In the NT the word is *charis* or 'grace' and means compassion towards those in need or who are helpless, **towards those who have NO CLAIM to favourable treatment.**

So, in Luke 10, the Good Samaritan is *merciful* because he has compassion on a man who is of a different race and is wounded to such a degree that he cannot help himself and so has **no claim to**, or expectation of, favourable treatment.

The man who was robbed and left half-dead on the Jericho Road *expected* the Samaritan to walk by on the other side.

By **NOT** passing by but offering this stranger help until he got better, the Samaritan showed mercy and grace.

The way of the world is to treat like-with-like.

Jesus speaks of this in Luke 6 v32-34

32 "If you LOVE those who love you, what credit is that to you? 33 And if you DO GOOD to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? 34 And if you LEND to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do this."

There is no credit and no mercy in living in this way.

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The merciful way is given by our Lord in v35:

35 "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back."

And why? In the very next verse, v36, our Lord commands us:

36 "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

God our Father is our pattern.

And in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 v7) our Lord taught:

"Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy"

The way of the world is to be UN-merciful and only do good to those who go good to us BUT THE WAY OF CHRIST is to do good to those who have NO CLAIM to favourable treatment.

And why should this be so?

Primarily, I think because we are all made in the image of God and, therefore, every human being is a person who should be valued and respected. There can be no ground for superiority if we all equally share the image of God.

We are special because of the nature of our creation, therefore, none should be despised and none denied mercy when in need.

So the command, "Go and do thou likewise," (Luke 10 v37)

is not so much a command that we do good works **as a command as TO WHOM they should be done.** And the DEFINING REQUIREMENT is that we help those who have **no claim to favourable treatment**, to those on the margins.

Hence, the classic list is that we:

1. Feed the hungry and thirsty
2. Clothe the naked.
3. Harbour the harbour-less (In today's world, 'Welcome the Refugee')
4. Tend the sick and visit those in prison
5. Seek justice for the oppressed and unjustly imprisoned.

Our world, in all its need, is a world in need of MERCY.

It's one of the key virtues that will change the world because it breaks the cycle of fear, breaks the cycle of un-forgiveness, breaks the cycle of hopelessness and offers a seed of hope and new life.

And it's something EVERYONE OF US can do.

"Go and do thou likewise." Luke 10 v37