



Luke 10:25-37

POVERTY

Harvest is not just a time to remember that our food and well being are a blessing from God, but to also remember that whilst we have been blessed with food and wealth, there are others in the world and in our own land too who suffer with issues of poverty.

When we view poverty, either in our country or around the world, what do we see; how do we feel?

Unreal - the media disconnects us from the reality of a Kenyan relief camp for Somalis hit by the drought.

It's not that much of a problem – the media – poverty.

It's their own fault – corrupt government, failure to invest, shouldn't have a civil war. But how much control do ordinary people have over corrupt government, terrorism, religious fanatics? And what happens to them if they stand up against it? They are powerless. And how can the worst drought in East Africa in a century be the fault of the poor of Somalia? Always beware stereotyping people – it may well be an excuse by some to discriminate against people or find an excuse not to help.

Or we look at people struggling in this country and see people in poverty and say "it's their own fault". Is it? There are 2.5 million people out of work at the moment. Whose fault is it? We know that for the vast majority of them, it isn't their fault.

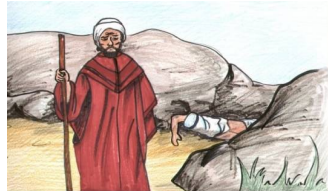
For a lot of people in this country, we look at poverty and say to ourselves, it's bad but what can we do about it? Can we make a difference? Let's go to a familiar Bible story for some help.

OFTEN BAD SITUATIONS ARE NOT OUR FAULT



Here we have this man walking from Jerusalem to Jericho when he is waylaid by robbers. We could argue the same for him as we do for those trapped in poverty. He shouldn't have been there. He should have known there were robbers on the road. He shouldn't have taken lots of cash in his wallet. Well at least they didn't kill him, so he should be grateful for that. So what, tough on him anyway, he's not my problem. But it's clear from the story it wasn't his fault. He was walking along minding his won business when these people attack him.

The main issues behind poverty anywhere in the world is that for the vast majority poor people, poverty is not their fault, it is brought on by poor harvests, poor government and bad people who exploit those at the bottom of society.



So here's our man, lying injured by the side of the road. But great, someone comes along who can help. He's a priest. But he walks by on the other side. Why? We're not given a reason. We would have expected a priest to stop. But he doesn't even break his stride, he avoids the injured man. Why? Because in helping the injured man, he would have made himself ceremonially unclean and be unable to serve in the temple – that was loss of earnings for him, apart from his not being able to lead people in worship

Oh dear. The Levite, the next religious person did give the man the honour of taking a look but he walked off to. You'd have expected religious people to show the most compassion to the man who was injured. Why didn't they – because their religion was more important than the command of God "love your neighbour as yourself". Both should have responded to the need, but both put themselves and religion first.

It's a lesson for us. Our faith is measured by our obedience to God. Our faith is about loving God, worshipping Him and is expressed by the way we show compassion to others.



The this man is the Samaritan. He had every reason to pass by this Jew as his race were treated badly by them but he responds differently. We know the story. He helped the man, put him on his donkey and left him at an inn to recover, covering all his costs.

What was the difference between the Samaritan and the rest?

1. He SAW THE NEED

This man was moved in his soul – when he saw him, he took pity on him. In other translations of the story, the phrase "He had compassion on him" is used, which is where we get this morning's title from. He didn't close his eyes to the need like the others and like so many people do today. No he chose to see the need. That's what Jesus does – He sees the need. That's how God looks at people:

Matt 9:36 'When He saw the crowds He had compassion on them'

Luke 10:20 'While he was still a long way off his father saw him and had compassion on him'

Loving God with everything means allowing Him to touch our emotions and saturate our souls with compassion so that when we see broken humanity the love of Christ wells up and causes us to respond rather than retreat. Do we close our eyes out of fear or open our eyes in faith that God can use us to bring healing into someone's life?

2. He ANSWERED THE CRY

It wasn't enough to see the need and have pity, he chose to answer the cry and do something about it. It's one thing to have faith but faith without deeds is not faith. The Word says 'he went to him'. We need to love God with our minds because when we love God with our minds it involves a conscious act of the will.

Listen, you can be moved by what you see on the news, or what you hear today but to love God with our minds is to yield our minds to Him and be obedient to His will. The Samaritan brought comfort to the needy man. He was aware of the danger and the inconvenience but he reached out anyway.

3. He REFUSED TO GIVE UP

He didn't just patch him up on the side of the road but he put him on his donkey and took him to an inn where he took care of him. Not only that but he was willing to pay the price by giving two day's wages and then promising to pay for any further expenses when he came back. You know when we love God with all our strength we will follow through in our commitment by doing whatever it takes. Sometimes we start with good intentions but so often we become half hearted and fail to complete the work.

However when it comes to showing compassion on someone else, that's a commitment we have to finish.

4. He was the KEY TO BRINGING LIFE

The Good Samaritan wasn't hindered by the difference of this man, he had the heart to make a difference to this man. He was willing to cross political, racial, cultural and social barriers and risk prejudices and the fear of the unknown because he saw someone with a need and he had the resources to meet that need. When we love God with all our hearts then nothing we have will be held back but will be freely available for the Lord to use. Our time, our money, our abilities, our whole lives – If you are a Christian today then Christ is living in you, what an incredible treasure within us that needs to be shared with others that they might discover His love and power too.

The Good Samaritan gave his time, his touch and his treasure to restore a broken person.



If we love God, we love our neighbour because that's His command to us and that's expressed in showing compassion:

By showing compassion for God's world – it's a world broken by sin, yet we have a message of life and hope - and we deliver that by showing compassion to others. Who are those others – they are people in our own town and community. As a church we are involved in several projects showing compassion to our community – parish nursing, town pastors, youth worker.

WHAT CAN I DO?

As a church we actively support mission and many of you individually support missions of different kinds. We thought we would show you the compassion stuff this morning as an opportunity in being able to make a difference in the life of an individual child. I know some of you do this already in connection with other missions. One of the advantages is that you have a direct connection with an individual person, someone whom you support and can pray for. Maybe the Lord is calling you to serve Him in this way by showing compassion to an individual child,

How does helping one child make a difference? A few weeks ago I gave you the illustration of a beach strewn with starfish that had been washed up and drying out. There was a man walking along throwing what he could back into the sea. Someone asked him what; what difference did that make? He picked one up and threw one and said "well, it just made a difference to that one!"

Each person is precious to God. When we show compassion to someone, it makes a difference to them and glorifies God.