



Trinity 13 2020 8.30 am

*Galatians 3.16-22 & Luke 10.23b-37 (Sermon)*

*In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan could just as easily have become known as the 'parable of the priest who passed by', or the 'parable of the disinterested Levite', or even, the 'parable of the foolish lonesome traveller'. After all, each of the characters has a full and important part to play in the story.

These are not just 'stock' figures who play true to type; indeed, the whole point of the parable is that the characters do *not* play to type. Each acts in a way which is scandalous, but none more so than the Samaritan. Not only does he not play true to his 'type', he behaves in such a way that his actions are quickly recognised by Jesus' audience as completely, mind-blowingly, extraordinary!

Samaritans were, after all, not only racially suspect, but heretics to boot; they were all thieves and brigands; you certainly wouldn't want your son or your daughter marrying one and they probably even read *The Guardian* and toyed with voting Liberal Democrat!

In pre-Covid days, if any of us can remember them, just before the start of the 11 am Choral Eucharist, the priest would pray with the Choir and the servers before coming in to the building. One of the prayers used went like this:

*“Bless, O Lord, us Thy servants, who minister in Thy temple. Grant that what we sing with our lips, we may believe in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts, we may show forth in our lives. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

The prayer asks that our lives may be congruent, integrated, whole: that our actions match our words and that our words match what we believe.

In Jesus’ parable, the characters showed that there was no integrity, no congruence between occupation espoused or the racial group from which his characters were drawn and their actions.

Being a priest or a Levite counted for absolutely nothing. There was no integrity in their calling, and it was only the Samaritan, the one who, in the eyes of the Jews, could have no integrity, who actually showed all the virtues of true faith, love, compassion, generosity and so on.

The Samaritan, unlike the priest or the Levite, was the only one, who showed that what he said with his lips and believed in his heart he showed forth in his life.

As Christians, our constant hope and ambition is that what we offer in praise and worship, what we say with our lips in Church, might really affect how we relate, not just towards one another, but how we relate to the world encountered hour by hour, day by day, week by week.

It won't always be the case, of course, that we get it right, that our worship and our lives are fully integrated: we will have bad days when we slip and fall - sometimes spectacularly, like the priest and the Levite; but each and every day we need to begin with the ambition that our lives, lived that day, will give glory to God: that, like the Samaritan, what we say with our lips, we may believe in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts, we may show forth in our lives; that our lives will be whole. Amen.