

## Pentecost 8, 14/7/2013, Holy Trinity

## Luke 10:25-37

The Gospel for this Sunday has a familiar ring about it.

We have heard it many times and we associate it with the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

We could easily give it a modern twist in some incident that we hear or read about almost every day.

In Luke's narrative the fundamental issue is in the lawyer's question to Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

This draws on the Jewish expectation of eternal life to include everlasting life which is an expectation of quality rather than quantity.

It is sharing in God's life.

It was the number one question in Jesus' day and it still is.

"What is after this life?" or "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus draws the man's attention to the Law (the Torah) and according to Luke's account the man does not make one commandment first and the other second but merges the two great commandments into one single requirement with the love of God and love of others belonging together.

The 'love of neighbour', then, has the same force as 'love of God'

Jesus affirms that this is truly the correct answer: "do this and you shall live."

Then, after Jesus tells the parable and throws the question to the lawyer and the lawyer answers, Jesus echoes the answer with "Go and do likewise."

Doing this commandment is the way to eternal life.

This thought may not sit comfortably with some Christians because it sounds too much like salvation by works.

In Acts we read "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved".

The two concepts, however, are not at loggerheads with each other.

The real issue here is the relationship the person has with God.

Are we playing a game with God "If I do this commandment can I claim something from God?" "Can I claim my place in some 'pie in the sky when I die' routine?"

Jesus is talking about loving God and neighbour – actually doing it both together, not prioritising one over the other.

Do we need to be reminded of the terrible things that have happened in history and even today when loving God takes precedence over loving one's neighbour?

It comes down to that question again: "Who is my neighbour?"

Are there limits? Does it include undesirables in the community or in the world? Just how far do we go?

It comes down to our theology of God whose being is loving and whose life is the creative and redeeming outpouring of such love.

As we hold to this theology loving one's neighbour is not a secondary obligation but an invitation to participate in the life and being of God.

To hold to this theology of God is to have a transformed society in which every human being is a neighbour and potentially a caring human being.

God is love and God invites us to participate in and become God's action in the world.

For our part this takes a lifetime for us to transform even one tiny bit of society but we can do it as we participate in and become God's action in the world.