

## COMPASSION

Life groups notes - week beginning 10<sup>th</sup> January 2016

### (1) THE CALL TO COMPASSION

'But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Luke 10.29

- Prayer

It's always good to start with prayer as it opens us up to God's presence, seeking his blessing on the time together and each other's' lives. You may wish to use your own words.

Here's a prayer of St Benedict which everyone could say together:

*O gracious and holy Father,  
give us wisdom to perceive you,  
intelligence to understand you,  
diligence to seek you,  
patience to wait for you,  
eyes to behold you,  
a heart to meditate upon you,  
and a life to proclaim you,  
through the power of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

- Read Luke 10. 25 – 37.

Each time you meet for the five sessions you may find it refreshing and enlightening to read this passage in a different version. If you have enough copies of the same version you might want to have a narrator and then those who read the spoken parts.

- Question (to be explored briefly. Each group member is invited to share.)

Is there a sentence, phrase or word that stands out for you?

- Background teaching

The expert in the law came to test Jesus (10.25). Jesus on the other hand lays down his own trap for the man, but his trap is the trap of love.

Our Lord asks for a summary of the law and the expert replies with an accurate summary:

- a) The law requires heart and mind to be totally submitted to and absorbed in God.
- b) The law requires we meet the needs of others with all the speed, eagerness, energy and joy with which we meet our own needs.

The law reflects the holiness of God and the debt we owe to the One who gives us everything. Since He has given us all we have, we respond by giving Him all we have.

Both John (1 John 3. 17, 18) and James (James 2. 15, 16) use compassion as a test as to how to authentic our faith is.

To ignore those in need is to sin against the law. No one makes the point more clear than Jesus in Matthew 25. 34-36 with the examination of humankind on judgement day. Jesus recognises those with true faith by their actions – concern for the poor, the homeless, the sick and prisoners.

'Whatever you did for the least of these you did for me.'

Jesus' teaching echoes a rich theme of teaching through the Old Testament and especially in the prophets.

- Questions (don't feel you need to answer all)
  1. When Jesus shows the indifferent priest and Levite He unmasks the very many false limits that believers can put on the command to love our neighbour. Can you identify limits that we put on loving our neighbour?
  2. Why do we tend to think that acts of compassion are optional?
  3. How does this parable affirm things you have done or are doing, and how does it challenge you?
  4. How do you feel this parable affirms what our church is doing, and in what ways do you think it challenges us?

- Closing prayer

Turn your discussion into prayer for each other. Pray for those in need and for our response to people's needs.

You may like to use the following prayers:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
 Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon;  
 where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope;  
 where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy;  
 O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
 to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.  
 For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
 and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

*(Prayer of St Francis)*

*I shall pass this way but once;  
 any good that I can do or any kindness I can show to any human being let me do it now.  
 Let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.*

*(Etienne de Grellet)*