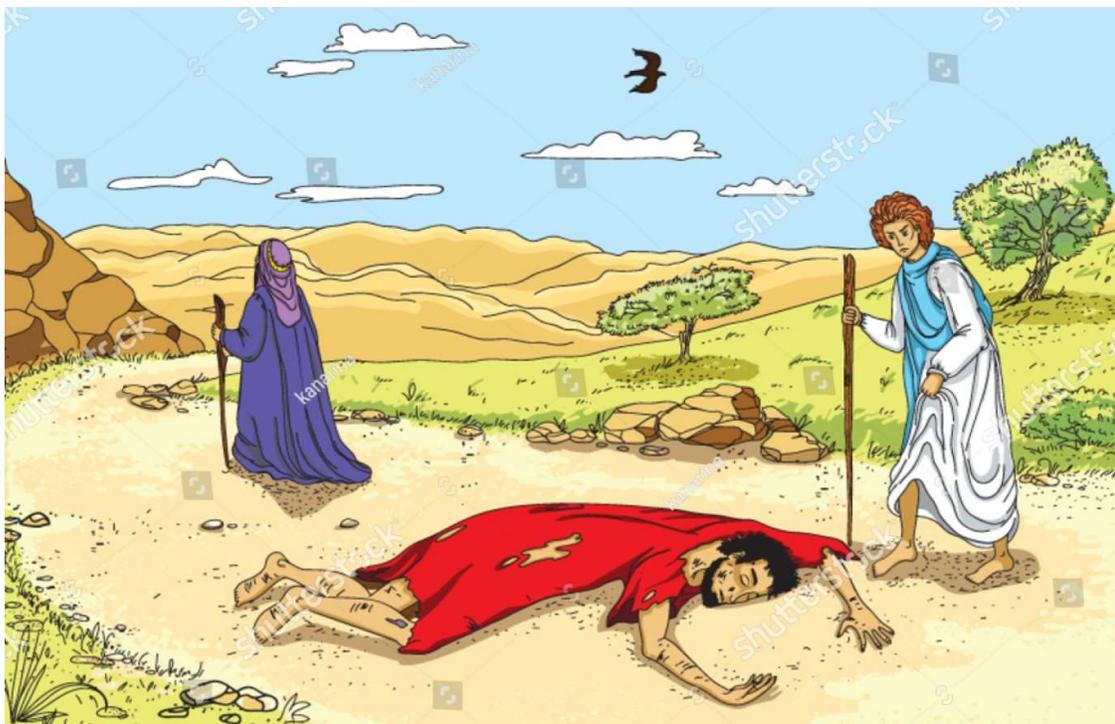


## Sermon 25

St Philip and St James  
Palma de Mallorca Spain  
10<sup>th</sup> July 2022  
Trinity 4

**Theme: Growing in Love is the supreme way  
of becoming genuine neighbours.**



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**TEXT: Luke 10:25-37**

## Introduction

Let us pray; Gracious Lord, may your Holy Spirit teach us the way to become genuine neighbours as you taught the legal expert in today's gospel. Amen.

A story is told of a certain man on journey that went into a gift shop to buy a packet of biscuits to eat while waiting for the boarding time of his plane. He set on a bench next to certain beautiful lady. He started to eat his 'biscuits' but what surprised and annoyed him was that each time he picks a biscuit to eat that woman will also pick another one as well. The trend continued until one biscuit was left in the pack. The woman looked at the man, with a gentle smile on her face she picked the pack and hand it over to that man. Raging with anger, the man harshly grabbed the pack and ate the last biscuit. Suddenly, it was

time to board the plane and the two parted ways and soon after boarding the plane the man discovered that his own pack of biscuits was in his bag and had mistakenly thought that the pack of biscuits he was eating from was his own but it belonged to the woman that was sitting next to him. Absolutely, the woman was a good neighbor par excellence. This story brings us to today's gospel reading and my theme is: **Growing in Love is the supreme way of becoming genuine neighbours**

## Exegesis of the Text

Today's story begins with a conversation between Jesus and a legal expert testing Jesus' knowledge of the law. The first test is the question; "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responded by referring the question back to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" The legal expert responded by citing the Shema, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus responded and said to him, "you have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." The legal expert is not done yet. Then comes the second test, "and who is my neighbor?" This was the question that led to the telling of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The location of the parable is the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Jerusalem was known as the city of worship with its beautiful temple, while Jericho was the residence for many people including priests and Levites. Therefore, it was expected that priests and Levites would travel regularly to Jerusalem to perform their temple duties. However, the road was notorious for its robberies and it became more dangerous when King Herod laid off forty thousand construction workers, leaving plenty of unemployed, some of whom turned to robberies. The distance between Jericho and Jerusalem was 17 miles and the road cut across the desert and rocky hill country. This made the road a great hideout for robbers. Three characters; the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan are important in this parable.

The first character to pass by the half-dead victim was the priest. He might have been returning after performing temple duties at Jerusalem. The parable is silent on the reasons why the priest had to pass by the other side of the road. The first possible reason was ‘fear of robbers, they may still be lingering around to attack yet once more. The second and most commonly held reason was concerns for purity. The dilemma before the priest was whether the man was dead or not. Leviticus 21:1–2 prohibits the priest from being defiled by a corpse through contact. They were only allowed to be in contact with the bodies of their nearest kin – mother, father, son, daughter, brother and virgin sister. Therefore, the priest had to play it safe because defilement had severe consequences for him and his family. If the priest became unclean, he must return to Jerusalem, stand by the Eastern

gate with the unclean, and go through the process of purification. He would have to buy and offer a heifer, which would take up most of a week and be of significant cost to him, his family, and his household.

The next person to pass by was the Levite. Again, these were the descendants of the house of Levi and were part of the priestly community. Their role was to help or assist the priest in preparing the animals, grain and birds for sacrifice. They were also affected by purity laws as they also worked in the temple.

The third and surprising character was the Samaritan. Samaritans were viewed as half-Jews and they were excluded by the Jews from the covenant promises. They were animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans. The climax of the

parable is when the Samaritan is the one who shows acts of love and care to this half-dead person. One would not therefore expect a Jewish rabbi (Jesus) to give a positive picture of a Samaritan. This was therefore a bombshell to the audience which was mainly composed of the Jews. The parable is challenging the boundaries that we set amongst ourselves as humanity. These are the identity boundaries that separate humanity along ethnic, racial, tribal, regional and national levels. As a surprise element of reversal of expectations, the Jews are to see the Samaritans as neighbours and not as enemies. Jesus concludes the story with the question; “which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” I don’t think that this was the response that legal expert expected. He had his own understanding of what it means to

be a neighbor that was different from Jesus' radical definition.

## Application

Here being a neighbor has nothing to do with color, creed, nationality, and regionalism. Being a neighbor knows no identity and physical boundaries but it is about acts of charity to those in need. We create a world where we only help those who are one of us. In the parable, Jesus teaches us that we should put aside our differences and help those who are in need of help. We are to use and grow our gifts from God for his glory. We cannot do all these on our own. We need God's love to permeate into our hearts. Under the influence of Love, we see in the Good Samaritan virtues such as compassion, mercy, solidarity, generosity, and hospitality. For us to be genuine neighbours like the Good Samaritan, love should reign supreme over us. Amen.