

Sermon Archive 250

Sunday 23 June, 2019

Knox Church, Christchurch

Lessons: Psalm 82

Luke 10: 25-37

Preacher: Rev. Dr Matthew Jack



Sometimes the world's not all that friendly a place. People do unfriendly things to one another. In exasperation, a poet-witness might sing a song about the weak and the orphaned, the needy and destitute - and about the wicked who pour diesel on the fire. I heard the other day that someone got mugged just down the road. They stole his clothes, for goodness' sake. Left him for dead. What's the world coming to? Mind you, I reckon he was pretty stupid to be out there in the first place. Everyone knows that stretch of road is bad news - "notorious" they say. I mean if you're going to go out into dangerous places, maybe you've only got yourself to blame!

Crime, violence, and plain misfortune. And sometimes in the presence of plain misfortune, a weird judging of the victim. As I said, sometimes the world's not all that friendly a place. Maybe we need the support of neighbours.

-ooOoo-

We've got new neighbours. Neighbours (who's my neighbour). I wonder what's going on next door. Well,

what's going on next door is a building - Te Korowai. Can buildings be "neighbours"? Obviously! To be neighbours, all they need to do is be neighbouring - stand next to each other. But can they be **good** neighbours? When Chinese-American architect, Ieoh Ming Pei, first floated the idea of constructing a giant modernist glass pyramid out the front on the classic French Renaissance style Louvre Museum, people were horrified. To be a good neighbour to the famous French landmark, some degree of architectural compatibility surely was required. I think Te Korowai and Knox are off to a good start. Neither building screams at the other. Maybe they even find some kind of simple structural harmony. Can buildings be good neighbours? Who is my neighbour?

We've got new neighbours. Neighbours (who's my neighbour). I wonder what's going on next door. Well, what's going on next door is an institution - well as much as Knox also is an institution. Each has a constitution. Each has a management structure. Each has a mission statement, a five year plan and a charities registration. But can institutions be good neighbours? Does an institution have a heart, such that it can be moved with pity? Perhaps no more so than a building does - unless somewhere within the constitutions, management structures and plans there is something flame-like, living. Who is my neighbour?

We've got new neighbours. Neighbours (who's my neighbour). I wonder what's going on next door. Well,

what's going on next door is activity - counselling, parenting groups, youth services, support for the elderly, community social work - much activity. Next door to all that, **we** make room for alcohol support, Tough Love, Fostering Kids, Tangata Atua Motu, the visiting of the isolated, reading, learning, connecting, nurturing of the spirit. Can activities be neighbours? Yes, they can go on alongside one another. Can they be good neighbours? Can they show mercy to one another? Who is my neighbour?

We've got new neighbours. Neighbours (who's my neighbour). I wonder what's going on next door. Well, what's going on next door is a whole lot of people - about sixty of them - and the other people who won't work there, but who will come and go in need. Some will have been victims of violence. Some, victims of crime. Some subjected to that odd form of worldly judgment (it's actually your fault - you brought it on yourself). All experiencing some of having fallen on the road. This web of helpers and those requiring help, the Samaritans, the inn-keepers, the animals pressed into carrying the temporarily incapacitated. This will be done for people, by people. Can people be neighbours? Well, although the answer should obviously be "yes", actually, it depends. The lawyer asks "Who is my neighbour" only because he wants to trip up Jesus - make him fall. How neighbourly is that? Who is my neighbour?

We've got new neighbours. Neighbours (who's my

neighbour). I wonder what's going on next door. Well, what's going on next door is the motivating of the building, the institution, the activity and the people by God's way of seeing the world. Next door, and here also, we see the world with a responsibility through compassion. The priest saw the fallen figure on the road, but did not see. The Levite saw the fallen traveller, but did not see. The Samaritan sees. He sees a neighbour - so becomes a neighbour.

Two buildings next to each other are just two buildings next to each other. Two institutions are just two institutions. Two programmes, even if they're vibrant, busy and have some synergy, are just two programmes. People come and go through all the webs of connection and happenstance, ships passing in day and night. It's all just all it is, until someone sees a neighbour. "Who is my neighbour?" As we, together, continue to ask, and look to the God of the Samaritan, welcome to the neighbourhood.