

Jericho Rd/Mercy St

Luke 10:25-37

By pastor Ken Keyte

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²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

^{Lk 10:27} He answered: " '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, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

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³⁰ In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.

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3

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³⁵ The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

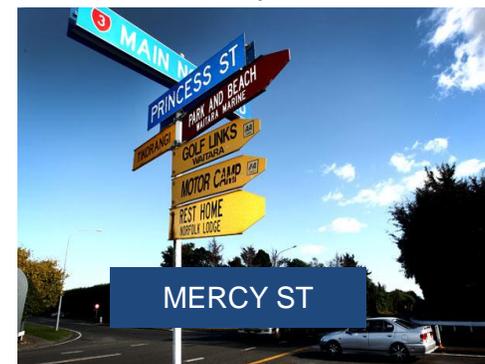
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4



As most of you know we've recently *moved house* and *changed address*. We used to live on *Princess Street*, which is a *quiet cul-de-sac off Cameron Road* not far from Te Puke Highschool and Intermediate schools. Our family has really enjoyed living and growing up on Princess Street.

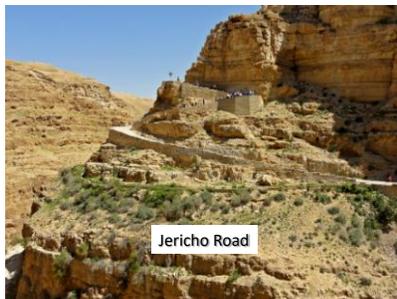
Now we live in a *new subdivision on Canal Farm Drive, off Oxford Street* in easy walking distance from town. Although we're still getting used to our new location, *Raewyn & I* and *Ashley & Yolanda* (our international student) are really enjoying living on *Canal Farm Drive*.

But this morning I want to talk about a *very different road*, one that you *don't so much as live on*, but one you can choose to *go down or bypass*, every day. The choice is up to you.

The biblical name for it is the *Jericho Road*, but I prefer to call it *Mercy Street* **4a** because of what we're *confronted with* (or *avoid being confronted with*) depending on whether we choose to *go down* or *by pass* this road.

According to *Jesus*, what you do on *Jericho Rd* (or *Mercy Street*) serves as a kind of *proof test*, proving whether we *deserve eternal life*, whether we *love our neighbour*, and *whether Christ lives in us!*

Mercy Street is a *proof test* because *who we come across and how we respond to them*, in fact proves whether we are a *follower of Jesus or not!* **5**



Any of you who've travelled to Israel and *driven from Jerusalem to Jericho* (which I haven't), will know how *treacherous the road is* even today, let alone what it must've been like *when Jesus told this parable about what happened on Jericho Road*.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is *steep and dangerous*. So *dangerous*, in fact, they call it "*the bloody way*". *Jerusalem* lies at *1000m above sea level*, while *Jericho*, only 25kms away, sits at *300m below sea level*. So in the space of 25kms (which is about from where the seal runs out at the top of n.o. 2 Rd to Te Puke), *Jericho Rd* descends *1300m* (or *4,000 ft*)!

And rather than meandering down through *beef and kiwifruit country*, like *n.o.2 Rd* does, *Jericho Road* descends *sharply* through *mountainous, cavernous terrain* ideal for *thieves to hideout* and *ambush unsuspecting travelers*.

As *Jesus* tells it, it was *on this road* that a man *fell into the hands of robbers* who *stripped him of his clothes, beat him* and then *took off*, leaving him *for dead*.

Proof of life

6



But before we *get too far into the parable*, we need to *back up* a bit to find out *why Jesus told this parable* in the *first place*.

He told it to *answer the question* asked by an *expert of the Jewish Law* who was trying to *test Jesus* by asking him a *very important theological question*,
"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

In asking that question, the legal expert was *trying to trap Jesus* into saying something derogatory about the two greatest commandments, "Love God" and "Love your neighbour as yourself"

So he asked Jesus another question, "And who is my neighbour?"

But the *story Jesus* told to answer *that question* is *actually a reverse trap* with which Jesus *turned the tables* on the legal expert, to reveal *the law expert* as the one who *wasn't keeping God's law*.

The parable is a *proof test* as to whether those who go down Jericho Road (or Mercy Street) *deserve eternal life or not!*

Putting it bluntly Jesus is challenging the legal expert and *everyone who reads this parable* to consider whether we are-
like the Priest and the Levite who *ignored the victim* of a social injustice (a crime)?
Or whether we're *like the Samaritan* who at great personal expense and risk *stopped to help the injured man?*

But since *most of us* are *unlikely* to ever have the opportunity of *driving down Jericho road* and looking out for a *wounded man lying on the side of the road needing help*,
let's consider some of the *neighbours we meet*, driving along *Jellicoe Road*, the road most of us drove down this morning *to get to church!*

Those of you who drove to church this morning on *Jellicoe Road* coming in *from the west*, will have driven by *Te Puke Camping ground*.
Inside Te Puke Camping ground, (*if you'd stopped and gone in*),
you will find *men and women* (young and old) living there,
solo Mums, solo Dad's, couples, children, babies even,

who are paying around \$250 per week to live in a *cold, moldy, smelly caravan* because that's the *only place* they can afford to live.

But *like me*, you probably *drove on by*, because we *haven't the time*, or the *inclination*, or *just don't want to know about who's living in Te Puke Camping Ground*,
why they're stuck there and whether they need our help.

Whenever we drive on by Te Puke camp ground, we *prove ourselves* to be *no better* than the *Priest and the Levite* who walked on by the *injured man* and by doing so *fell short of God's law* about *loving your neighbour as yourself!*

You see, the parable of the Good Samaritan *proves that we do not deserve eternal life!*
Therefore we *can only be saved by the grace and mercy of the One who came to Mercy Street!*
Where he *stopped to help the wounded victims* of this *messed up world*, that we may receive *eternal life* -
through *what Jesus has done on the cross!*

Phew, glad we got that straight!
At least now we can *drive by Te Puke Camping Ground* without a *guilty conscience* because we *didn't stop to help!*

But *not so fast!*

Proof of love

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You see *not only* does *Jericho Road* (or *Mercy Street*) offer us *proof that we do not deserve eternal life* and that *our salvation depends upon the grace and mercy of God*, it also offers *proof* of whether we *love our neighbour or not!*

The religious law expert *didn't* want to acknowledge that he was *spiritually bankrupt, unworthy of salvation* and in *need of God's mercy and grace*.

Instead he wanted to *justify himself* by asking Jesus, "*Who is my neighbour?*"

By doing so, he wanted Jesus to *define the second commandment* in such a way as to make its requirements *reachable* for him.

But the parable of the Good Samaritan, *doesn't* define the *second commandment* in such a way as to make it *reachable* for the *law expert*, for *us*, or for *anyone!*

The parable shows us *how unreachable* it is to *love our neighbour* the way God wants us to because Jesus is seeking to *humble us with the love God requires*, so we'll be willing to *receive the love God offers!*

Back then, the *Priests and the Levites* were an important part of the *social welfare* system.

So the *law expert* could easily have *justified himself* as *loving his neighbour* by *paying his tithes and offerings* to the temple so the *poor and needy* could be helped.

And if he was also a *landowner* he could *also* have *justified himself* by leaving the edges of his field *unharvested*, so the *poor and the widows* could *glean* from *what was left for them at harvest time*, thereby fulfilling the requirement of Exodus 23:10-11.

We might think the same!

"I do my bit, I pay my taxes towards the country's *social welfare system, sponsor a child* through World Vision, *donate to aid organisations* for disaster relief from time to time, and *pay my tithes* to the church!

Surely that's enough to be justified as someone who *fulfills the second commandment* by *loving my neighbour in all these ways!*

Evangelical Christians *like us*, are by *no means* against helping the needy and the poor.

Yet "*social work*" (or the social gospel as its sometimes called) is generally regarded as a *secondary duty* of the church.

The parable of the Good Samaritan *shatters that set of priorities* by showing that *mercy ministry* is *not optional* for any *follower of Jesus*, but is *proof of our love* for *the one who loves us* so much he *gave his life that we might live!*

1 John 3:17-18 backs this up.

¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother or sister in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

When Jesus asked the law expert, "*Which of the three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?*"

The expert in the law *correctly* identified him as - "*The one who had mercy on him.*"

The Samaritan's *act of mercy* in helping the injured man, *proved* he had *the love of God in him* by loving *not just with words* but with *actions and truth!*

How do *your actions* and *mine* prove whether we have *the love of God in us?*

Those of you who drove to church this morning along Jellicoe Road, coming in from the *East*, (this time) will have driven by *Te Puke County Lodge Rest Home*. Inside *Te Puke Country Lodge*, *if you'd stopped and gone in*, you will find *elderly people* sitting in chairs, *staring vacantly into space*, waiting for their next meal *or for someone to visit them*.

We even have a *member of our church* residing there.

Since she has *acute arthritis*, she's not allowed to get up and walk anywhere by herself, in case she falls and hurts herself. So she spends most of the day sitting in a chair in her room, waiting to be taken to her next meal *or for someone to come and visit her*.

But *like me*, you probably *drove on by*, because *we haven't the time*, or the *inclination*, or just *don't want to know who's living in Te Puke Country Lodge Rest Home*, *why they're stuck living out their final years there*, and *whether they need our help?*

The parable of the Good Samaritan *proves who has God's love in them by the mercy we show to our neighbour in need, whoever it is and whatever their need may be!*

Proof of Christ

8



After the expert in the law had *correctly identified* the one who'd fulfilled God's command to love your neighbour as yourself, as being "*The one who had mercy on him*" Jesus *hit home* his lesson with a simple command. "*Go and do likewise!*"

There *once was a church in Corinth* who were having *second thoughts* about *taking up a collection* for their neighbours in *Jerusalem* who were going through a *tough time* because of a *severe famine*.

So the Apostle Paul wrote these words to them:

9

Mercy Street: Proof of Christ

(2 Corinthians 8:7-11)

⁷ But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you *also excel in this grace of giving*.

⁸ I am not commanding you, but I want to *test the sincerity of your love* by comparing it with the *earnestness of others*.

⁹ For you know *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that *though he was rich*, yet for *your sakes he became poor*, so that *you through his poverty might become rich*.

¹⁰ And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. ¹¹ *Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means*.

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With those words Paul encouraged the church in Corinth to *show mercy for their poor neighbours* in Jerusalem *by giving generously to them*, as *living proof of Christ at work in them!*

10



The residents of *Te Puke Camping Ground* and *Te Puke Country Lodge* are just *some of the needy neighbours we drove by* this morning on *Jellicoe street*, on our way to church.
There are many more!

According to Jesus *what you do on Jericho Rd* (or *Mercy Street*) (should you choose to go down it), serves as a *kind of proof test*, proving whether we - *deserve eternal life*, *whether we love our neighbour*, *and whether Christ lives in us!*

Mercy Street, is therefore *not a street we should ever by-pass* because *according to the parable Jesus told*, *who we come across and how we respond to their needs*, *defines whether we are a follower of Jesus or not!*

Because the same command Jesus gave to the law expert he gives to us: *"go and do likewise!*