



# Season of Lay Ministries

## Fourth Sunday after Trinity

### 10 July

#### Preaching notes

##### Readings

Deuteronomy 30: 9-14

Psalm 25: 1-10

Colossians 1: 1-14

Luke 10: 25-37

One of the very striking things about Jesus as we encounter him in the gospel narratives is the way in which, when he wished to illustrate or identify a characteristic of discipleship or a quality of spiritual life, he often did so by pointing to someone far beyond the circle of those closest to him.

So, for example, he sees a poor widow in a far corner of the temple putting two small coins into the offering box, and says that is true generosity. The Roman centurion who comes to Jesus to ask for healing for his servant exhibits, for Jesus, faith beyond that of any he has seen in the “house of Israel”. To illustrate the heart of prayer, Jesus tells a parable comparing the self-confident, self-righteous prayer of a pharisee with a publican who stood far off, bowed his head and asked for God’s mercy. Those who were Jesus’ true mother and brothers and sisters were all those, whoever they were, who did the will of God.

And to illustrate the true nature of love for neighbour, Jesus tells the story in today’s gospel reading about a foreigner, a Samaritan, who crosses the road, takes time and cares for the need of an injured Jew.

*As we continue to reflect in these weeks after Pentecost on the ministries to which God calls each of us, it is timely to be reminded that, if we open our eyes, we might see the radical reality of ministry modelled in unexpected places and in surprising people. As you take time over these weeks to pray and listen to God about your own discipleship and vocation, take a look around, look to those on the edge or the fringe, see what God is up to; and, as you do, listen to your heart, and hear God’s call.*

The good Samaritan wasn’t a Jew and, as far as we know, had no status or ministry within a religion. But he responded to a need in front of him, he saw a human being in need, he crossed the road, he acted with compassion, love and courage. It was a ministry.

It is of course necessary and right that we build structure around our ministries within church and in the community. Our structures of training, shared discernment and authorisation provide the framework within which ministries can flourish effectively, safely and joyfully. But if, in rigidity or formalism, we lose the essence of spontaneity, compassion, service and love we will lose everything.

For in the radical, barrier-breaking love of the good Samaritan we see, in sharp focus and vivid colour, the true nature of the eternal, inclusive, unconditional love of God. It is that love which shapes and inspires every Christian ministry.

*As you reflect on your ministry, or the ministry to which God might be calling you, where do you see that same love giving it shape and direction?*

Paul, in today’s New Testament reading, introduces the metaphor of growth. The gospel, like a seed, bears fruit and grows. The lives we live bear fruit in the good work we do and in our own growth in our faith and knowledge of God.

Seeds are good symbols for the ministries to which God calls us. Sometimes they might appear small and even insignificant. At other times, like a seed that disappears in the ground, what we do might seem to be wasted or ignored. But in God’s economy, nothing is wasted. The seeds that are our acts of love and service, the care, the leadership, the companionship we offer and the action we take, will in God’s hands produce fruit.

Seeds are planted, seeds are thrown and blown, seeds are carried on the wind. The ministry to which God calls us is not carefully calculated, it is not

halfhearted, nor does it come with strings attached. It is a gift from God to us that we hold lightly in our own hands, and it is a gift we choose to offer to others freely and generously.

We don't offer our service to God and others seeking any reward or result, we are not looking for praise or appreciation. But as we offer ourselves, our time, our words, our energy and our love with generosity, creativity and joy we will see fruit, God's fruit. The seeds we plant, the love we give, by God's grace, bring life to others and hope to communities.

*As you reflect on your ministry and your life, what are the seeds you sow? Where do you see these making a difference and bearing fruit?*

It might be that you are listening to this and finding that word "ministry" difficult or puzzling. We often use ministry to refer to very specific roles or jobs within the Church. There are, certainly, some specific ministries, including ordained ministries, to which some people are called. But each one of us is called to share in God's mission in the world and in supporting and strengthening each other in playing our full part in that mission.

The particular shape or form of our ministry is something we are invited, especially in these weeks, to explore. This exploration is in essence a task of shared listening, or discernment. We listen to our heart, we listen to the gifts and skills and passions that God has given us, we listen to the reflections and wisdom of others and we listen to the needs around us. In that listening we are seeking to listen to the voice of the Spirit of God, and to hear the call of God. It might seem a big task or a complicated exercise, but it doesn't need to be. Just give it time, give it space, talk with others, open your eyes and your heart and it is amazing how clearly God can speak. Find someone to share this journey with you.

In particular, do take time to find out about the various opportunities for service and ministry in your local parish, both inside and outside the church. And do talk to someone about the opportunities that the Diocese of Southwark is offering for training and commissioning.

Is this an opportunity for you to review or renew the shape of your ministry? Who might walk alongside you and help you in that journey of listening? Might you help someone else in their discernment?

The Old Testament reading for today ends with

these words: "Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?' No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe."

The call of God to each of us is not far off. God doesn't shout to us from a distance or communicate with us in a language that only especially holy people can understand. No, if we are still, and make time and space to listen, we will find that God's word is very near and we will hear his gentle whisper. God's call is in your heart; may we, by his grace, listen and respond.

*The Venerable John Kiddle  
Archdeacon of Wandsworth*

## Prayer

Lord Jesus,  
you humble us with the story of the Samaritan  
and challenge so much of our response  
to the needs we see where we walk.  
Help us as we minister in your name;  
to leave the safe path,  
to look in the edges,  
to bind up the wounded,  
to help where we can  
and seek help where we can't  
and to know that there is no burden  
too heavy to carry.  
Amen.

*The Very Revd Andrew Nunn  
Dean of Southwark*

## Suggested hymns

Broken Vessels (Hillsong)  
Brother, sister, let me serve you  
Build your Kingdom here (Rend Collective)  
Go forth and tell  
God of justice (Tim Hughes)  
Gracious God, your love has found us (Ally Barrett)  
Jubilate everybody  
Oceans (Hillsong)  
Where you go I'll go (Chris Tomlin)