

## Commitment – “Loving our neighbours”

Luke 10:25-37; James 2:14-26

Sermon – Rev. Bruce Stanley

[www.waitara.anglican.asn.au](http://www.waitara.anglican.asn.au)

### **III – Video clip – Mr Bean and the Busker**

*Would you bother doing something like that for someone you didn't even know?*

**III** – “Today Tonight” did a recent experiment where a lady walks down the street and accidentally drops her purse. Then they watch to see if the person who sees it and picks it up actually gives it back to her or not. 75% actually gave it back.

*Would you do that for someone you didn't even know?*

### **PPT - Christian love has no limits.**

Luke 10: A man walks down a road. Robbers jump out, strip him naked of his clothes, beat him until he's nearly dead and leave him lying on the side of the road.

A priest sees him, crosses the road, and walks past.

A Levite, an assistant minister in those days, sees him, crosses the road, and walks past.

Then a **Samaritan** walks by and stops. A man considered by Jews to be the scum of the earth. And this **Samaritan** stops. And look at what he does:

He sees the man. He takes pity on him. He goes to him. He pours wine on his wounds to disinfect them, he pours on oil to soothe them. He bandages the wounds. He puts the man on his donkey and walks him to Jericho. He takes him to an inn. He takes care of him overnight. He leaves him with the innkeeper and pays for his room and meals. Then he tells the innkeeper that he will come back and pay the bill of any other expenses the man might have.

The priest and the Levite walk past. The Samaritan goes out of his way to help a man he has never met before.

### **Why** does Jesus tell us this story?

Because a lawyer stopped him on the road and said to him:

“Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus says: “What is written in the law? How do you read it?”

The lawyer responds “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. And love your neighbour as yourself.”

And the lawyer is right! He knows what the Scripture says about this. He quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. But in order to justify himself (verse 29), in order to make sure he has fulfilled the requirements of God's laws to the letter, he asks “who is my neighbour?”

He's not asking “What should I do? He's asking: “What's the *minimum* I need to do in order to be O.K. with God?”

**III** – There are often minimum requirements you need when you enrol for a university course or go for a job. You might need a certain score on your exams, you might need 2 unit Maths or English, you might have to be able to type 80 words a minute. Or you must be “this tall” to go on a ride.”

**PPT – What Jesus says here is that Christian love has NO LIMITS.**

How often do we think “What is the minimum I can do”, when it comes to following God?

How often do we look to fulfil our duty, rather than go the extra mile for someone? How often do we try to do the *minimum*?

**PPT – The second thing we learn here is that Christian love has NO BOUNDARIES.**

### **III** – My neighbours

I've had some interesting neighbours in the past 8 houses I've lived in. One neighbour had kids who just yelled and screamed all the time. One neighbour had loud parties until 7:30am on a Sunday morning. One

neighbour used to answer his front door completely naked. One neighbour was a drug dealer. One neighbour took an axe and killed his wife and daughter.

If I were to turn to God and say “Do you want me to love *these neighbours?*”, God would say to me “No, Bruce, I don’t want you to just love *them*. I want you to love every single person you come across. I want you to love the screaming kids, the one that keeps you up all night, the drug dealer and the axe murderer. But I also want you to love *every* person you walk past.”

“Love your neighbour”, God says. And leave no stone unturned. Leave nothing undone that you could have done to help *any* person in need. Forget any plans you had, forget their colour, race or language.

“Who is my neighbour?” Jesus says “everyone”.

**III** – the changing face of our neighbours.

It’s been said that the greatest change of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was computers and the internet. It’s also been said that the greatest change of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is multiculturalism. More than ever before we are living next door to people from different cultures. They may eat different food, wear different clothes, speak a different language, or have different gods and beliefs. Quite often, we may not be able to find *anything* in common with them.

How do we begin to show love for those we have nothing in common with? And why should we try so hard? Does Christian love have no boundaries?

**PPT - Genesis 1:27:** “*So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them.*”

Out of all of creation, only *people* are made in the image of God. We are called to love all people, because they are made in God’s image.

If someone tells me they hate my sons, then they might as well tell me that they hate me! If you say that you hate your neighbour, you might as well tell God you hate him. Whether it’s your next door neighbour, or your neighbour in the next room at work, or someone who you pass in the street and have never met before, or a beaten up man lying half dead by the side of the road – God sees your neighbours and says “I made them in my image, and I love them.”

Whether your neighbour is a Muslim or a Buddhist, a God-hater or an atheist, God loves them and wants them to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour. If you say you love God, then you need to show your love for all the people he has created in his image.

**PPT - Christian love knows NO LIMITS and has NO BOUNDARIES.** There is no “minimum standard” and there are “no boundaries”, because all people are made in the image of God.

And when we *do* find that we have limits and boundaries on our love, James has something to remind us of:  
TURN TO JAMES 2:14-26

**PPT - James says: “No fakes”**

Have a look with me at James 2:

**PPT - verse 17:** “*faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead*”

**PPT - verse 20:** “*faith without deeds is useless*”

**PPT - verse 24:** “*You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.*”

**PPT - verse 26:** “*faith without deeds is dead*”

**4 times** James tells us that if you claim to have a faith but don’t put it into action, you have a *false* faith. James tells us that faith alone is what puts in a relationship with God, but it must be GENUINE faith. And genuine faith is characterised by ACTION!

Compare these two well known verses from Romans and James:

**PPT - Romans 3:28:** “*For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.*”

**PPT - James 2:24:** *“You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.”*

Some people would say these verses contradict each other. But they don't. Paul says in Romans 3:28 that we cannot earn our way into heaven. We cannot be saved by doing *good things*. We are saved by having FAITH in Jesus Christ alone. That's how we inherit eternal life.

James, however, takes it one step further. He agrees with everything Paul says, but he *also* says that if you have a TRUE faith, a real faith, then **actions** will come out of that faith.

**III** – For example, an orange produces orange juice – otherwise it's useless!

Many people **“claim to have faith”**, but they never do anything to show that their faith is genuine.

**Do we have a faith that is genuine?**

**PPT - James 2:14:** *“What good is it my brothers if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?”*

In other words, is such a faith genuine?

If we are true believers of Jesus, if we love God, the way we live and act should reflect that faith. People should see us in our lives “Loving God” and “Loving our neighbours.”

No limits. No boundaries. No fakes.

Do you have a real faith?

We can read our Bibles daily and pray daily and be at church and Bible study each week. We can be on church rosters and give to charity and missions and we can bring our kids up well. But if we can choose to ignore the needs of our next door neighbour, or simply walk past someone in the street who's in need, if we can choose to ignore people simply because everyone else is ignoring them, then what faith do we have?

**III** – I'm sure if our neighbour's house was on fire, we would call the fire brigade, or perhaps even run in there and warn them. Obvious stuff. Human nature to act like that in an emergency. At times like that, our love for another human would possibly know no limits, and would have no boundaries. Christian or not.

**But what about the small things?** The hungry person you walk past. The next door neighbour without a job. The sick member in your congregation. The new migrant who needs help with their English. The mentally ill person without a friend. The guy at work whose wife just left him.

No bravado. No-one watching you. No glamour. No “life or death” situation. Just love. Stranger or ext door neighbour – would you go out of your way?

No limits. No boundaries. No fakes.

Just genuine faith that puts into action those words: “Love God”, “Love your neighbour”

That's real faith. And it will not only save YOU, but has the capacity to save others.

Remember what Jesus says in Luke 10:37? Very simple. “Go and do likewise.”

Let's pray.