

**Care for One Another**  
**November 21, 2021**  
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Thank you to Emily for reading from Luke and 1 Corinthians this morning. The story of the Good Samaritan is a very familiar, well-worn story. It's so familiar that anytime we hear a story about a stranger helping a stranger, the helper is referred to as a Good Samaritan. The concept is as familiar in broader culture as it is within Christian culture.

Like any familiar Bible story, there's no limit to what we can learn from this story. You could hear sermons and read books, and you'll never find an end to what this story by Jesus can teach us.

A few of us recently read the book, *A Fellowship of Differents: Showing the World God's Design for Life Together*. In the book, Wayne Gordon, a Chicago pastor, is quoted answering the question asked to Jesus: "Who is my neighbour?" Wayne Gordon answers,

**My neighbour is someone hurting, who needs help, who cannot help themselves, who appears on my path, who has been robbed, who is half dead, who is naked, who is unable to ask for help, of a different race, who is a stranger, who has been stripped, who is a foreign traveller, who has been beaten up, who might require me to take a risk, who can't walk, who looks horrible, who is of a different religion, who is destitute, who is a victim of injustice, who has been passed by, who can't say Thank You, who has been wounded, whom nobody want to help, who is lonely, who will cost me some time, who is visible, who is a victim, who has been violated, who is vulnerable, who is a human being, who feels humiliated, who feels helpless, who is poor, who is someone I'm afraid to help, who is dangerous to help, who is discouraged, who might cost me money, who needs tender loving care, who feels defeated, and who is someone I am able to help.<sup>1</sup>**

I was excited when I heard this answer, which is Jesus' answer, to "Who is my neighbour?" Yes! This is profound! This is something I can really get behind! I was excited and motivated when I heard Gordon's summary of who our neighbour is. Preach, Wayne, preach!

Within thirty seconds of that excitement, I had a sinking feeling in my stomach. "Oh, no. I don't do any of this!" I have encountered this neighbour time and time again. And there are very few times that I have actually helped them. I have been annoyed with the neighbour Jesus describes more often than I have been helpful or even simply present with them. Like the other characters in Jesus' story I am more likely to step over the person in need and walk on by than I am to help.

The neighbour we are to see and to help is often a person that we avoid. The person in need can be awkward. They can be demanding. They can be unpleasant. They can be offensive to be around.

And Jesus says, "So what?!" This is the neighbour we are to see and care for. The Samaritan in Jesus' story pushes through every barrier presented to him to help this stranger, this neighbour.

The stranger is bloody, oozing, broken and naked. The previous people in the story avoid him. But the Samaritan steps through the offensive appearance and mess and helps.

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<sup>1</sup> *A Fellowship of Differents*, Scot McKnight, Zondervan, 2014, p. 155.

The stranger is a burden. He cannot walk on his own. He has no power to move himself. But the Samaritan pushes through the issue of mobility and helps.

The stranger is expensive. Everything has been taken from him. He has no money. But the Samaritan pushes through the financial barrier and helps.

The stranger costs the Samaritan his time. Other people pass by and think, “Well someone really ought to do something about this,” and move on their way. But the Samaritan takes the time to get this person a place to stay and checks up on them later.

The stranger is an actual enemy of the Samaritan. But the Samaritan pushes through that barrier and becomes a neighbour.

The Samaritan makes the stranger abandoned on the side of the road their problem, and practically helps the stranger out.

Who is my neighbour? Anyone that needs my help. Anyone that I can help.

This is the kind of attitude and action that Paul encourages in 1 Corinthians 12. In these verses Paul encourages the us to favour those who need help. He takes the list of people that Wayne Gordon calls our neighbour, and Paul says these are the people that you need to honour.

**<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour.**

Those people in our church and in the Christian community of Lethbridge that you dismiss and avoid, they have special honour. “No! Not them!” Yes them. They are indispensable. The people in my church that I am most likely to treat as disposable God says are indispensable.

**And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, <sup>24</sup> while our presentable parts need no special treatment.**

The people that I gravitate to, that I find easy to connect with because they look like me, act like, me talk like me? They don’t need any special treatment. Of course I still honour and respect and dignify those people who are just like me. But the ones that Paul describes as “unpresentable” – the embarrassing, cringe-inducing people – they are to be treated with special modesty.

The inconvenient and difficult people are indispensable. They are to be acknowledged, honoured and respected. They are to be given special care and attention. The people that we want to step over and hope that somebody else will deal with? Those are the people we are to engage and honour.

- When you heard the word “weaker” who did you think of right away?
- When you heard “less honourable” who did you think of right away?
- When you heard “unpresentable” who did you think of right away?

All of those people, according to Jesus, are indispensable. Yes, even THAT person. The people you have written off, Jesus has placed at the top of the list. Those are the neighbours. Those are who we need to care for. And most importantly, those we need to see as our equals.

If we stop reading 1 Corinthians 12 right here, there is room for arrogance. There is a lot of room for us to be kind to people while looking down on them at the same time, to be helpful yet condescending. “Well that person is a weaker member so we’ll just treat them with special honour, won’t we.” “Oh I love to help the less fortunate.” What a disgusting phrase, “less fortunate.” I know we don’t mean it this way than we say it, but it automatically puts us on a high level of honour and the other person on a level of being pathetic. When we help the people Paul would described as “weaker”, “less honourable” and “unpresentable”, we are not to keep them in that status while we see ourselves as strong and honourable.

We are to see ourselves as exactly equal with those who are in need.

**But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.**

We are to see ourselves as exactly equal with those who are in need.

We are never to treat others in the church, and in the world, as people that need us to be heroes. We are never to be lowercase “s” saviours. We lift up others who need help and need honour so that we are all equals.

When we read Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan, we are most likely to see ourselves as the good Samaritan. As we listen, we never, ever want to be the person left on the side of the road. We don’t ever want to be seen as the weaker member, or the more shameful member. We are too proud to be that person. Our culture, both Christian and otherwise, values independence. We believe it is a shameful thing for us to ever be in need. And that is a lie that Jesus wants to destroy.

There will be times in our church where all of us will be the weaker member. There will be times where we will even be the unpresentable member. There will be times where all of us will be the ones that simply cannot make life work, and, man, is that ever embarrassing.

But that strong, independent life is not the life Jesus has come to give us. Strong independence is the opposite of the community Christ calls us to be. Christ comes and levels the playing field between all of us. Between all people.

There’s a group of people within our church that has been encouraging one another to do simple acts of kindness to others as the expression of our faith in Christ. This group also shares examples of simple acts of kindness that have been shown to them. Here’s a story that was shared of showing care to someone in need, and sharing that care without a sense of “You are the needy person and I am the helper.”

**This past week I noticed at school drop off a fellow mother looking especially tired. She has 3 kids under the age of 5, one of whom is a newborn.**

**I found out they moved here from [another country] and don’t have family or any community support here! So it’s been very difficult being so isolated.**

**I asked her if she would feel comfortable accepting some soup that I had made and her eyes brightened with the offer.**

**Today her husband returned the container and he told me that the meal really helped them get through last week.**

**I reassured them that with the cold weather I always make too much soup and I'll keep them in mind!**

**I love to care for others by sharing meals.**

**It was an AMAZING feeling to be able to do this again for someone.**

The helper in this story is a person is making a connection. She sees a person and engages with them in a way that she is able to contribute. She is not doing this out of pity. This is a person and family in need, but they are approached as equals. The helper is stepping through the barriers to caring. They are extending belonging and welcome.

And from what I know of the helper, they will also be willing to receive help when they are the "weaker member", as all of us will at some point be.

We cannot help everyone. To be everywhere is to be nowhere. But who are the people in need that the Holy Spirit is drawing to your attention?

Who are abrasive, obnoxious members that the Holy Spirit is asking you to see as equals and treat with honour?

Who is your neighbour?

We are going to consider the answers to these questions with a poem written by Nina Weaver, a poem that encourages us to consider one another, pay attention to one another and to care.

### **Tower of Babel (From Genesis 11:4-5)**

**By Nina Weaver**

**You, who sit beside me in church, what is your heart  
language today? Will I understand? Can I celebrate  
with you? Cry with you?**

**You two who sit behind me, are you speaking the  
language of love? Are you the newly married  
ones I heard about as I entered the church doors?  
Are you excited? Do you speak from a heart of  
happiness?**

**You, across the aisle, looking stern, is your heart filled  
with the language of anger? Is it hard for you to  
communicate even with those you love? Or do  
you not want words just now . . . How can I know?**

**And you, filled with the obvious language of joy, have  
you just found a job? Or perhaps that's a new**

**baby tucked in beside you?**

**Or you, with your head down, what is your sad heart  
language? I see a tear slide down your cheek.  
You look unhappy, fragile. Do you feel my silent  
words as I lift you in prayer?**

**God, how can I know? How can I understand? What  
should I speak? This day, God, help me hear with  
your heart and your understanding.**