



## **St Francis' and St Mary's churches in West Wickham**

### **Sermon: Week 1 – The Good Samaritan**

#### **1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Luke 10:25-37**

The Good Samaritan is an allegory for the journey called 'life' and it's a road we all travel.

The priest and Levite were maybe too busy or preoccupied with church life because, when they saw his need, they 'passed by on the other side'. They were indifferent and detached.

Jews didn't consider the Samaritans to be their neighbours, but he was the one who reached out. He showed compassion and concern.

This is "Paraklesis", which is a word found 142 times throughout the New Testament.

It comes from two Greek words:

- Para: to be with, alongside
- Kaleo: to call, to come

The Samaritan came alongside the hurting man, took care of him and journeyed together with him.

The New Testament teaches that paraclesis is a ministry for all, not just the vicar and the pastoral care team. We are all part of 'one another' – it is what the Body of Christ is all about. This is what our first reading from 1 Corinthians was all about. God calls us to journey together in life.

The opposite of paraclesis is self-focused living. We are naturally self-centred. We are born that way.

Loving your neighbour as yourself doesn't come naturally – it's difficult to read the signs and signals that other people send out and our perceptions of people can be completely wrong. We need to reach out and engage with others in order to really understand their needs.

Even if you are struggling with life and it's difficult to help in another's struggles, one little thing that we can all do is to encourage another. There is a longing in the human heart to be affirmed and encouraged.

But to encourage sometimes means being willing to move out of your comfort zone. The Samaritan stepped out of his comfort zone and overcame an important hurdle – being afraid that he would be rejected. This fear develops a core value of self protection. We

don't engage because we want to protect ourselves. Unless we get over this hurdle, we will never move into that dimension of paraclesis that God has made available to us.

On the cross Jesus was rejected and humiliated by those He came to love. Here the depths of our rejection and unacceptability were taken on by Jesus Christ. Now we no longer have to live behind barriers and strategies of self-protection. And so the choice is ours ...

Will we be like the priest and the Levite? Remaining detached and indifferent. Hiding in our own agendas, busyness and rituals.

Or will we be like the Samaritan? Refusing to hide, he stepped out of his comfort zone, he reached out, he came alongside and journeyed together with the man in need, taking care of him and fulfilling the paraclesis ministry.

In answer to the lawyer's question, 'who is my neighbour?' Jesus recounted this paraclesis story of the Samaritan and then asked him, 'Which of these ... was a neighbour ...?' to which the lawyer replied, 'The one who had mercy on him'.

Jesus then issued the challenge, and it is a challenge for us too: 'Go and do likewise'