

Monday 21 March 2022- Human Rights Day/UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Luke 10: 25 - 37

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

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

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 neighbour as yourself."

28 'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.'

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'

30 In reply Jesus said: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by 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 travelled, 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, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii 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 neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?'

37 The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.'

Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'

In South Africa we celebrate Human Rights Day while the rest of the world today celebrates UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Even in Jesus' day discrimination was rife amongst the people. The Jews would not even use a utensil that a Samaritan had used, even if it had been washed a hundred times. Jesus tells this parable to the Jews to make them think differently, to challenge their preconceptions and prejudices.

While most people do not overtly discriminate there are subtle ways that we treat each other differently. There are certain suspicions that we have of others based on past experiences or what we have been told or group mentality. Sometimes we see our group as the one that is being threatened and in our surge to protect our own, we discriminate against others (as we saw with the refugees at the Ukrainian border posts and with the recent Xenophobic attacks in South Africa). Sometimes we have had a bad experience with someone of a different race or culture and we then treat everyone of that same race or culture as aggressors. (Many people were really upset with the Ukrainians for how they treated foreigners and condemned their actions but more reports have come from other foreigners who have told stories of being protected, helped and cared for by Ukrainians – we so easily paint everyone

with the same paintbrush, that's how prejudice and discrimination starts). Sometimes it's propaganda that we've heard so many times before that we begin to believe it. In most cases the perpetrators feel that they are in the right.

We each need to examine the way we see others. Instead of judging others based on whatever criteria we have made up, we need to judge our own prejudices, examine where they come from and work towards seeing others with new eyes, treating each person with dignity and respect. If we discover that our prejudices stem from a hurt that we have not dealt with, then we need to seek help to work through our hurts. We cannot change other people, they need to choose to change for themselves, but we can choose to change ourselves and to set an example for others to follow.

Prayer

Father, we confess that we all struggle with prejudice. We judge people based on various criteria that we have created in our own minds. We make some people better than others based on arbitrary categories that have no real basis or truth.

Father, we are sorry for any time we have perpetuated these biases and made life more difficult for others. We are sorry for the times when our prejudices have hurt others and stripped them of their dignity.

Holy Spirit, make us aware of our prejudices and where they have originated from. Help us to strip them away so that we view each other not by worldly standards but rather as you see us.

We pray for an end to all discrimination around the world and we pray that we will be the start of that change.

In Jesus name we pray,

Amen.

Rev KS Brown