



Caring for seafarers
around the world

The Master's Mariner

Sydney

Winter, 2004.



SEA SUNDAY THANKSGIVING SERVICE

**WILL TAKE PLACE AT
FLYING ANGEL HOUSE
[320 SUSSEX STREET SYDNEY]**

**ON
SUNDAY, 11TH JULY 2004
AT 2:00 pm.**

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL CHAPLAIN

The passage set down for Sea Sunday is found in the tenth chapter of Luke's Gospel, in verses 25 – 37. **The Parable of the Good Samaritan** is one of the best known of Jesus' teachings, and the term 'Good Samaritan' has become synonymous with acts of kindness towards strangers. We might easily imagine that Jesus received a warm response to this parable, with its emphasis on acts of kindness, but in reality his hearers would have been deeply offended by it. Why so? Let's find out as we revisit this famous story.

The Law of Moses commanded Jews to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Leviticus 19:18). A Jewish lawyer asked Jesus to define the limits of 'neighbour'. The parable was his answer.

A 'certain man', a priest, a Levite (a member of the tribe of Levi, appointed by God to assist the priests in the Tabernacle and later, in the Temple) and a Samaritan were each going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Almost certainly Jesus' hearers would have understood

the priest and the Levite to be returning to their homes in Jericho, still on a spiritual 'high' after fulfilling their rostered duties in the Temple. The road was not the safest of routes, for the wadis on the 'road' made ambush easy. The man was savagely attacked, stripped of his possessions and clothing, and left for dead. Because he was stripped and unconscious, his tribal / national identity (shown by his clothing style) could not be known. Was he a 'neighbour' or not?

The Priest and the Levite

Each of these men had vital roles in Israel's worship of God, the priests serving as mediators (on an individual and national basis) between God and the people. Their ministries in the temple were decreed by God, to the end that His wrath against our sins was directed towards an animal, whose blood was shed instead of ours, as expiation for sins. (Only in Jesus was that system fulfilled, as God offered the life of His perfect, only Son as the perfect sacrifice to pay – once, and for all – the death penalty for our sins.) So it was essential that the priest / Levite avoided defilement, details of which were to be found in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

One of these laws (in Numbers 19:11-22) said "Whoever touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days." Added to this were myriads of human 'qualifications' that sought to detail the application of this law in virtually any circumstance. Sadly, these regulations came to assume an authority as least as great as the law itself. So, when the priest - and later the Levite - came upon the man, many legal considerations came into play, which influenced their behaviours.

For example: if the man was still alive, each of

them was obliged to do all they could to save the man's life, regardless of expense or personal convenience. But if the man died whilst in their care, the priest / Levite would be defiled.

If the man was dead, they would be defiled if they touched his body – even if they touched it with stick, or even if their shadows fell upon the man's corpse. If the body lay beneath an overhanging rock, the region of defilement would be extended by more than 2 metres.

If they were defiled at this time the priest / Levite would:

- have to tear up his own garments
- remain defiled for a week; and have to stay in 'quarantine' for that week;
- lose all his entitlements (food and money tithes) from his time of temple ministry. If he was head of the house, none of his family could receive them either)
- sacrifice a prime heifer
- have to pay for the man's funeral (if the man was Jewish)

The penalties for defilement were very costly, and were especially stringent for priests: *"No (priest) shall defile himself for a dead person among his relatives* (Lev. 21:1)

If the unconscious, unidentifiable, man was a Jew, the Priest / Levite would come under many costly obligations - unless he kept his distance and opted for an 'ignorance is bliss' approach. Each of them opted for personal safety and convenience as they kept their distance and passed the man by. To have 'got involved' could have cost them a great deal. What might we have done in the same circumstances?

The Samaritan

Samaritans were despised by Jews as heretics and 'terrorists', because they

- rejected all the books of the Old Testament except for the first five – the Books of the Law
- refused to worship in Jerusalem, and
- rejected the ministry of Jewish priests;
- had, throughout their history, often sought

to sabotage any effort by Israel to re-establish the Temple worship in Jerusalem.

Consequently, the mutual antipathy between the two nations was long standing and very bitter. The Jews of Jesus' time felt no obligation to save the life of a Samaritan – they were well outside all Jewish definitions of 'neighbour'.

Yet Samaritans, because they accepted the Books of the Law, also feared defilement by contact with a corpse. However, the compassion of this Samaritan overtook any fears of defilement for himself, his animal, or his goods. The magnitude of his compassion is seen when the following factors are also considered:

- to proceed to the inn on foot (with the man being carried on his donkey) made him an easier target for robbers;
- because he had accepted the Samaritan's money, the inn-keeper (often held to be of dubious character) had to carry out the Samaritan's instructions, but if the inn-keeper violated the bond and cheated the Samaritan by spending fraudulently on the man, the Samaritan had no claim to repayment in a Jewish court. Thus, the Samaritan's pledge was an *extraordinarily generous* action!

Jesus' Answer

Although Jesus was asked, 'Who is my neighbour?' (a question that infers 'non-neighbours'), he does not answer the question! Instead he demolishes any restrictive definitions of 'neighbour' and instead describes what it can mean to 'love your neighbour as yourself'.

Although this parable is much loved by Christians, Jesus' answer did not please his hearers one little bit. Not only had Jesus portrayed Israel's religious élite as ritualistic legalists devoid of the steadfast love and mercy that is at the heart of God's nature (*'For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.* Hosea 6:6), but he assigned these qualities to a @\$& Samaritan! The offence was so deep that when Jesus asks his questioner, *'Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a*

neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?" (Luke 10:36), the lawyer would not even take the despised name upon his lips as he said "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise." Luke 10:37

For all of us who are involved in the ministry of the Mission to Seafarers, there can be few better passages for us to have before us as we seek, in the name of Jesus Christ - so full of grace and truth – to 'go and do likewise'.



Chaplains' Access to Ports and Ships

Over the past months, security requirements involving shipping have become increasingly stringent as shipping companies seek fully to implement the regulations in the Maritime Security Bill, which is to be fully implemented on 1st July 2004. It is a testimony to the long-standing excellence of our reputation that we have been able to continue to visit seafarers on board their ships, and sometimes still to be able to drive our bus to the ship. We are very grateful to Patrick and P&O Ports for their support of our ministry in this key area!

Passport & Identity Document Requirements For Foreign Crew Of Non-Military Ships

From 1 July 2004, foreign crew members arriving in Australia without appropriate immigration documentation will not hold a Special Purpose Visa and will be restricted onboard the vessel.

From 1 July 2004 all foreign crew are required to hold:

- a valid national passport; and
- a seafarers identity document that both identifies the holder and states that he/she is employed as a seafarer on that vessel.

Examples of such documents include Sea Service Record Books, Seaman's Books and Seafarers' Passports where record of service is stated.

Any foreign crewmember who does not hold both a passport and a valid seafarers identity document on arrival in Australia will not hold a Special Purpose Visa. Inadequately documented crew will not meet immigration clearance requirements and on arrival will be restricted onboard the vessel.

In addition the Australian Government will issue the owner/operator/master of the ship with an infringement in respect of each inadequately documented crewmember. The penalty for each crewmember is currently AUD \$5,000.

Whoops!



"They fly through the air with the greatest of ease, Those magnificent men on the flying trapeze."



The loneliness that seafarers often experience can be a have catastrophic effects on their lives. Although the Mission cannot replace family members, the care and friendship of the staff in the many Mission Centres around the country, often serves to ease the pain of separation form family and other friends.

Corn Corner **The Good Old Titanic**

Arriving at port the Captain was approached by one of his new crewmen.

"Captain, sir ", said the young fellow, " I would like to introduce you to my Great Aunt Mary." After exchanging pleasantries the crewman and his aunt left.

The next morning while preparing to leave port the crewman thanked the captain for his time with his aunt. "She loves boats", said the crewman, "You know all my life growing up she told me many stories of when she was on the Titanic!"

"Are you telling me that your aunt survived the sinking of the Titanic?!"; exclaimed the shocked captain.

"Wow!" said the crewman, "that's why you're the captain, sir. All those years and that's one question I never thought to ask her!"

Fish & Chips

One day while driving home from his fishing trip in the pouring rain, a man got a flat tyre outside a monastery. A monk came out and invited him inside to have dinner and spend the night. The fisherman accepted. That night he had a wonderful dinner of fish and chips. He decided to compliment the chef. Entering the kitchen, he asked the cook, "Are you the fish friar?" "No," the man replied, "I'm the chip monk."

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Thank you so much to all of you who – in such love – support our ministry by prayer, by the giving of your time and energy, and also by giving financially. We are gratefully indebted to you all!



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