Sermon: **“Which of these three was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”** (Luke 10.36)

We have all been in awkward social situations. Maybe you don’t know anyone, or don’t share what the group has in common, or you are a bit different. Can feel like an outsider, though not as drastic as Jews thought of Samaritans (and vice versa).

Good Samaritan story often used to tell us to help neighbours, however different they are. Don’t be like Priest/Levite. TEXT.

How often do we justify ourselves when we bypass those in need? They are begging, drunk, aggressive, depressive, or have dementia. We give them a wide berth, and do not listen to their stories.

Sometimes this is the right thing to do, for we feel vulnerable, or unable to help.

If we had been in Jesus’ story we probably would have been like the Priest or Levite. They had important work to do, that others depended on, and delay was not an option… TEXT.

NB. Samaritan’s day would have been seriously disrupted – time and expense.

This parable is not given so we can unthinkingly copy the Samaritan, but to reflect on.

If man had been with others on a well-known mugging route – stupid man.

If Romans had kept law and order – uncaring authorities.

If Torah had not been so restrictive – well-meaning but ‘unable’ religious types.

If Samaritan had not stopped – sensible option in a dangerous place.

If Samaritan had been poor – might have died anyway.

If the man had refused help from a Samaritan…

26 Oct 1967, during Vietnam War, a US bombing mission took place over a light bulb factory in Hanoi. An aircraft was shot down, the pilot ejected, lost consciousness and his heavy gear dragged him to the bottom of a lake. A retired Vietnamese colonel heard the air-raid siren and saw the ejected pilot splash into the lake.

Instinctively he swam into the lake, and levered the pilot off the bottom and pulled him to shore. Once on dry land soldiers tore his clothes and began to beat and kick him. Our hero stepped in, the beating stopped and a military ambulance took the pilot to prison, where he would remain for the next 5½ years. The pilot’s name was John McCain, who later became a U.S. senator and candi­date for U.S. President in 2008.

Years later, McCain asked the man why he rescued him, an enemy pilot. He replied: “When I saw you were in difficulty in the water, you became a human in my heart.”

Sometimes doing good is about being the right person, in the right place, at the right time.

But it is also about recognising & seizing opportunities that arise & recognising our common humanity.

Just as important (more so?) the story tells us to allow those ‘others’ to be *our* neighbours, helping us.