

Who Is My Neighbour?

This Eucharist or reflection was written to go alongside the story of the Good Samaritan and so asks ourselves the question of who are our neighbour?. A few years ago I was privileged to be invited to break the fast during Eid with the neighbours of friends of mine. When gently asked why we had been invited they told us that the Qur'an taught that we each have a responsibility to care for our neighbours 50 households in each direction The story of the Good Samaritan goes even further and teaches that that foreigners and strangers are our neighbours too.

You teach us that the greatest commandment is to love God and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

But who is my neighbour?

Is it the person who lives next door to me?

Because on one side the house is empty and boarded up

And on the other they have teenagers who play drums and loud music?

Who is my neighbour?

Is it the extended family that lives a few doors down?

Who don't cause us any trouble

But whose lives seem overcrowded and chaotic?

Who is my neighbour?

Is it the Islamic teaching that neighbours are 50 households in each direction?

Because living here in Openshaw

50 households would embrace the whole community?

Who is my neighbour?

And Jesus stops our excuse filled questions

By telling a simple story of a man beaten and robbed

And the respectable people who walk by.

Who is my neighbour?

And Jesus tells of the Samaritan, the stranger and foreigner

Who stops and helps

And spends his own money to ensure the man is taken care of.

Who is my neighbour?

And I am reminded of the older woman who fell in the street

And the young woman and two men in a united utilities van

Who stopped and helped.

Who is my neighbour?

And I am reminded of the mother who lives at the end of the block

Who took the bleeding, confused woman into her living room

Called the ambulance and went to visit her the next day.

Who is my neighbour?

And I am reminded that after the London bombing threw everything into turmoil

People cared enough to give strangers their mobile phones or money

To enable people to contact families and find their way home.

Who is my neighbour?

And Jesus takes a piece of bread, breaks and shares it among us
This is my body broken for you
Eat it all of you for you are all my body on earth.

Who is my neighbour?
And Jesus lifts a cup of wine and shares it with them
This is the new promise sealed by my blood
A new promise that calls you to care for each other.

[Share bread and wine]

Who are our neighbours?
Our neighbours are those that live around us
And those who live 50 household in each direction
And especially those who are foreigners and strangers to us.

Who are our neighbours?
Our neighbours are the good Samaritans
The most unlikely of people who go out of their way to help us
Will we do the same?

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