

## Message from the Barton Manse

Luke chapter 10 tells us that a lawyer asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life. In response Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan and asked him which of the three passers-by was the neighbour to the man who had been robbed and beaten? When the lawyer answered that the neighbour was the one who had helped the man, Jesus told him to do the same.

I expect it is a familiar story and one that you scarcely listen to any more because you have heard it so many times, but I invite you to reflect on it now because it has something important to say to us in the twenty-first century.

It is a story of hospitality and hospitality requires a conscious effort to give attention to the other, whoever they might be. The hospitable person keeps the shared space of the moment inviting and welcoming and Christian hospitality is the intentional caring act of welcoming or visiting those who are strangers, enemies, difficult or different, without any thought of reciprocation.

Sometimes we worry so much about how we are going to face those who need our hospitality that it immobilises us and we end up doing nothing. Jesus did not go out to look for someone to heal. Jesus' hospitality was not calculated but casual. In fact, for lovers of English Grammar, Jesus lived his life as a type of present participle: "as he was going, he saw".

There is great value in organisation, in planning and in meetings in order to help those recognised as in need but we also should develop the skill of 'seeing as we are going'. By adopting the vision of Jesus, by seeing as and how Jesus sees, our hospitality will become natural and unforced, effective and personal.

I think too often we assume what the other person needs whereas Jesus' hospitality was to ask, to listen and to heal. No one is too old to learn from Jesus so let us try to follow his example and offer a welcome space where the other can feel able to speak and be heard and valued.

Let us offer Christian hospitality to all those we encounter today, tomorrow and always.

God bless, Ros

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