

## Questions?

### Luke 10:25-37 with reference to Amos 7:7-17

July 2022

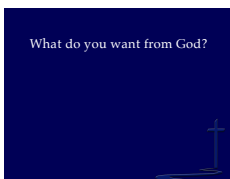
#### Amos 7:7-17 NRSV

7 This is what he showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. 8 And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said, "See, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass them by; 9 the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." 10 Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. 11 For thus Amos has said, 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land.'" 12 And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; 13 but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom." 14 Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, 15 and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' 16 "Now therefore hear the word of the LORD. You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac.'" 17 Therefore thus says the LORD: 'Your wife shall become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be parceled out by line; you yourself shall die in an unclean land, and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land.'"

#### Luke 10:25-37 NRSV

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 27 He answered, "You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." 29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

## Intro:



I'm starting 50 meters back today

Q1 What do you want from God? Do you know?



Beyond material needs It has been suggested that people and societies tend to want three things.<sup>1</sup>

- Freedom
- Community
- Significance/Meaning

<sup>1</sup> Mark Sayer on This Cultural Moment Podcast 2019

These are all fruits and outcomes of the Gospel of God in Jesus so valid things to seek.

Q<sub>2</sub> What would your number 1 be?

Q<sub>3</sub> Is one perhaps primary?

Q<sub>4</sub> Did Jesus lead on one ahead of the others?

I would suggest that meaning and significance is primary and where Jesus led from.

- What is the deep nature of reality?
- What is God like?
- What is a life in God like?

In my reading this is the basis for freedom and community.

Meanwhile we are in a cultural roller coaster right now with some local twists beyond the global culture war.

In general, this cultural moment is focused on freedom as the primary concern - Freedom for the individual to be who you want to be which is driving gender and societal change at high speed.

There is a bit of interest in community as Matariki illustrated last week.

The distant 3<sup>rd</sup> on the list -if there at all- is significance and meaning. Part of the reason for that is that the prevailing philosophies hold that there is no ultimate significance or meaning. In my reading Philosophers gave up trying to construct any meaning at depth about half a century ago.

The resurgent abortion debate of the last few weeks illustrates the priority of Freedom and the unwillingness to consider the meaning of being human. The same thing happened over the last decade with marriage towards it being what people want without real reflection of what it is.

Meanwhile we are hoping to be a happy community which is not going to happen without significance and meaning.

**Development:**

Q<sub>5</sub> So how do you work on meaning and significance?

Perhaps it's about information?

We have better access to more information than ever before yet meaning and significance wither.

St Paul's comment might apply here too: Knowledge puffs up, love builds up!

So as I try to have us look at Jesus as often as possible let's ask:

Q<sub>6</sub> Did Jesus work on meaning and significance? -

or, did he just build community and tell people what to do?

And how did he work on meaning and significance?

I see Jesus doing that again and again.

He was not a philosopher but a discipling teacher who took people down to levels of transformation that could change everything about them.

Now to illustrate I'll refer to how computers work.

If you use a computer, you will have information in files. Let's say a text document or photos?

These files run on Applications. Our hand-devices have Apps which are smart dedicated tools.

But underneath the Apps on both computers and hand devices runs an operating system. That system enables and empowers the device to run Apps/Applications and process information.

Most of us only know the operating system updates every now and then but never interfere with it.

Unless it has a problem it runs underneath and in the background.

Jesus did not add much to the running applications of the Jewish people but he really got in deep at the level of the operating system. He got down below the information and tools to change things to the level of meaning and significance.

Fundamentalists of all sorts focus on information and the applications but are blind to the Operating System they run on. This is where Jesus went.

As a typical Jew, he had a powerful tool with which to do this: Questions.

Now by way of background to the background here: God loves conversation with his children.

Adam and Eve met with God for a chat in the cool of the day, until one day when God had to call: "Adam where are you?"

Today we heard from Amos -the first writing prophet- about a conversation he had with God.

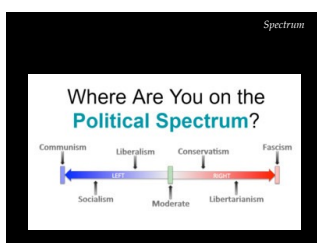
7 This is what he showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. 8 And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said, "See, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass them by;



Amos saw something and God asks: What do you see? Amos can answer that he sees a plumb line but the LORD brings him what this visual information means and sets out the significance of what he has rightly seen. By revelation he takes Amos down to the level of significance and meaning of it which he is to speak from.

Now to Jesus on mission where he engages people to transform them at the deep level below knowledge and apps. He does this with questions.

Now changing operating systems is no small things. It involves a paradigm change which I'll illustrate with reference to voting:



Now imagine you have voted for the same political party all your life. You may even have been a party member? What would it take to shift your support from that party to another? What would it take to move from one side of the political spectrum to another?

A big shift like this might happen,

- after a succession of disappointments?
- or, you may be so impressed with the performance of the other party that after careful reflection you decide to shift your support?
- or there may be a crisis of big impact?

That's like what's involved in deep change at the level Jesus speaks into.

This is deep discipleship.

It's part of being 'born again'.

### **Text**

So once again in the Gospel accounts a lawyer, expert in the Torah or Law of Moses, comes with a question.

This is not unusual and people test Jesus against their established understandings or present him with charged questions he might embarrass himself with. There are neutral innocent questions and curly loaded questions.

Jesus is never caught out.

The Torah or the Law of Moses is at the level of an Application or App. It provides the information that can be conveyed in text as instructions from the Lord-God of Israel.

"Do this." "Do not do that." Etc. - sometimes in great detail.

But as lawyers, know the question often looms:

But what does it mean?

Our Prime Minister loaded the Covid App with a specific instruction, "Be Kind." We get the words but, How do we understand, interpret and apply that?

So the Lawyer asks his opening question:

"Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus deflects this basic question back to the Law as a simple comprehension exercise of their shared App:

26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

The Lawyer offers a response drawn from two places, Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

27 He answered, "You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself."

This was apparently an existing and widely accepted answer among the legal minds of the day.

Jesus is prepared to accept that. The lawyer has read the Torah app correctly.

28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

So far this is high school level of comprehension and nothing surprising.

But now it heats up as the lawyer reveals skin in the game, or a personal stake in this:

29 But wanting to justify himself, he (the Lawyer) asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

This man is wanting to somehow look good or find assurance in relation to this.

### Key Moment

This is a fundamental question at the level of Operating System and not Application.

The answer to this question is not available in the basic search function. It lies in the mind of the one who reads the text and runs the Torah app.



As with everything, what we bring to the text as our operating system will determine how we read it.

Something I want to bring out here is that this question marks a profound moment in human history.

Who is my neighbour? had always been considered in terms of 'people like us.' So 'neighbour' was family, tribe, village, ethnicity or friends and acquaintances.

It's natural to love people like us.

This is easily backed by a code of reciprocity. If I help you then you will be obliged to help me.

It makes perfect sense to love these people and consider them as our neighbour.

Jesus is about to mess with this and it will be the first time in human history.

So whether your 'neighbour' is determined by skin colour, culture, accent, whakapapa or social standing. Jesus is about to reset that in the operating system of all who follow him.

So Jesus tells a story to consider: "Who is my neighbour?" as set in his operating system and that of God's Kingdom.

You all know the story. It's been told now for two thousand years to make a point that only Jesus -ONLY JESUS- is documented as making: All people are our neighbours.

To establish this he involves the social hierarchy of his day, the ethnic and sectarian divides.

It has been suggested that Samaritans are to Jews as Muslims are to Christians.

They have taken our book and messed it up.

There have been wars and persecutions.

We have things in common but it's not an easy fit.

Jews saw Samaritans as having messed with their Torah App and being mongrels.

So among the respectable religious types rushing to their duties reading their Torah App a nameless man of unknown identity is overlooked and left to fade and die. Too bad!

But the half-caste Samaritan with the corrupted Torah App has pity for this pour soul left to die.

This pity leads him to not only rescue the victim with his own ambulance service but pay for recovery time at a local inn come care home – and pay for it!

Pity is a clue to some alternative Operating System he is working from.

He knows the Torah too but reads it differently that day.

Having told the story Jesus now asks the question:

36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

The Levite, priest or Samaritan. The answer is clear but sticks in the throat of the lawyer.

37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy."

Pity or mercy are what really drives the love of neighbour, not whether this person is related and there may be reciprocity. This is the Operating System that needs to inform the Torah App and what we read there.

Jesus then invites him to live out of that deep transformation. This is discipleship.

Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Recognise all those who need mercy as your neighbour and love them as you love yourself.

### **Cultural Application**

The implications of what Jesus said here to this lawyer eventually captured the imagination where this story was read and read in churches all over Christendom.

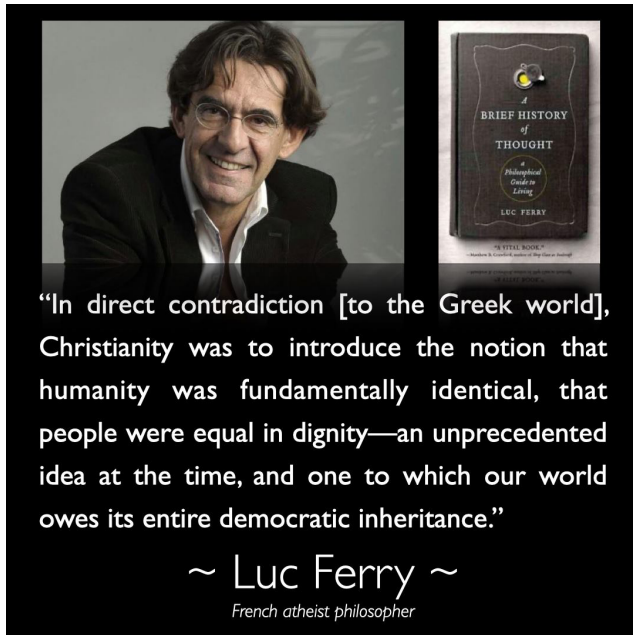
The vision of our neighbour being the fellow human in trouble took time to land and had many set backs yet it moved forward.

When our Prime Minister spoke into the Covid Crisis saying "Be Kind." she was in fact drawing on this deep consciousness that Jesus brought here.

Christianity provided a vision of humanity having dignity no matter who you were or where you came from which had not existed before. That vision of dignity starts from a very distinct place; That human beings bear the image of God, the *imago dei*. That deep significance is unique to the Bible. It's not found in Islam, or Hinduism or Buddhism – it's a uniquely Judaeo-Christian concept.

Here's a French Atheist philosopher making the connection between this and democracy as we know it.





So what can we do with this?

I am passionate that Jesus gets the credit.



This dignity of every human being is not a Marxist or leftist invention.

It was revelation brought by Jesus to transform humanity and equip us to live in God's Kingdom.

If we move away from this then some people are worth more than others and some can even be left to die. Does that sound familiar?

Thank you Jesus for coming to bring deep transformation and change our Operating System to that of your Father and the Kingdom.

Don't keep this a secret. The dignity of every human being as our neighbour worthy of our mercy is a unique Jesus idea. Let's make sure he gets the credit!