

DAY 1 (Week - Monday 18 June)**Read:** *Deuteronomy 24:19-22*

Whenever we have a good look around us the reality and sadness of poverty becomes clear. In our communities on most street corners there are folk holding their hands out to receive what they are offered. And yes there are those who find it easier to beg rather than to work, but the large majority is desperate for something ... anything!

Today's reading is a reminder of this very fact. Whilst the civil laws of the Old Testament, such as those in Deuteronomy, aren't binding on us as they were in ancient Israel, we shouldn't ignore or dismiss them as irrelevant or unimportant. We can glean from them principles that have continuing implications for how we live our lives today as God's People.

God often tells the Israelites to lend to the poor without interest and to distribute goods to the needy and defend the fatherless, because "the LORD your God ... Defends the cause of the fatherless and widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing" [Deut. 10:18]

So how should we apply this ancient law to our context? Many of us don't even farm. Well ... we need to try and pinpoint the original intention of the law and then think about ways in which that original intention can be lived out by us as God's people now in our community and world.

That is how individuals in a community ought to REACH OUT. God knew that there will always be THE HAVES and THE HAVE NOTS among us. The HAVES are those who don't really have to worry about where their next meal is going to come from. And on the other hand the HAVE NOTS are those who suffer injustice and economic hardship. We are called to REACH OUT if we HAVE.

Meditation: *Am I a HAVE or a HAVE NOT?*

DAY 2**Read:** *Isaiah 49:4-6*

Israel was a community that was scattered because of their disobedience to God. Isaiah the prophet tells us that God will REACH OUT to the community and to bring them back.

Isaiah 49:1-7 is widely accepted as a prophecy of the coming of Jesus, God's Servant. Jesus, would come to REACH OUT and bring all people back to God.

However there are also other theologians who suggest that there is ambiguity in the passage as to who is being referred to as the servant. But I also believe that by being quite ambiguous here, God, speaking through his prophet Isaiah, is also telling each of us something else about God's nature, about Jesus, and about each of us. I think God wants us to understand that while Jesus is the one perfect servant, Jacob is a servant too, and all the people of Israel, from the kings to the lepers, are servants as well.

And all of that can only mean this: *we are servants, too*. I think we find it hard to believe that this passage could be about us, but I think that's exactly what God wants us to know.

So as servants we are called to follow Jesus' example as to the role of a servant. That is to serve and REACH OUT to others. Jesus REACHES OUT TO US continuously. So as we accept His invitation we have to follow His example. When God spoke these words through Isaiah, it was a calling to all nations, but also a calling to every individual. God intends that we, too, will be a light to the nations; reflecting Christ's own light into the world around us.

Prayer: *Lord make me like Jesus. Help me be a light and serve others. AMEN*

DAY 3**Read:** *Acts 6:1-7*

A COMMUNITY THAT REACHES OUT ought to be doing so on behalf of Christ who we say we follow. So if we are a faithful servant and we diligently and selflessly serve God through serving the Man of God, we are sharing in His wonderful work. But then we also indirectly do three things which are core to the fulfilment of the Kingdom Agenda. They are:

1. Spreading the Gospel. That is revealing the truths of Christ's love and making it known to the people.
2. Increasing the number of disciples and followers by winning souls for Christ. And....
3. Getting die hard opposers, who didn't want the Gospel to prevail or gain dominance, to make a u-turn to follow the faith and be obedient to the Christ.

However we should be careful because our differences can come between us and winning souls for the Lord. The disciples were wise in choosing folk from varying backgrounds to serve and work together.

But when we read deeper into this passage we also see that there were certain folk who were not being REACHED OUT TO. This was about to have a catastrophic affect on the church which was still in its infancy. But the same can happen in more established churches and communities. We must be careful when REACHING OUT that it is not only to a certain group of people. God loves us all equally and asks us to REACH OUT TO EVERYONE in need.

Meditation: *Do I reach out and to who?*

DAY 4**Read:** *Matthew 25:31-40*

Being a servant like Jesus is demonstrating the love of God. It is doing some kind, humble act out of love with no strings attached.

I have often heard people say that their religion is private and personal; meaning they don't want others to know too much about it. But Christianity and our relationship with God may be personal ... but it is not meant to be private.

Our life with God is a life that is designed to touch others in practical ways. In other words we must be open to sharing God's Love ... in practical ways. We must be found REACHING OUT. It is in doing the small thing that we show the main thing ... God's love.

In John 13, the night before he dies, Jesus washes his disciples' feet and then challenges them to love others. Jesus then makes this observation in John...*"Everyone will know that you are my disciples because of your love for one another."* By doing the small things we never fully know what small act of kindness will touch and transform a life.

In today's passage we get a hint from Jesus as to what the small things are: giving bread, sharing water, giving clothes, visiting the sick and those in prison. It is the simple things that show the love of God. There are many other practical things that we can do.

But we need to always remember that the acts of service are done in Jesus' name. Done to honour Him and not ourselves. That is true REACHING OUT.

Meditation: *How can I in practical ways show my love for God by serving others?*

DAY 5**Read:** *Luke 10:25-37*

Two characteristics of the Fruit of the Spirit is KINDNESS and GOODNESS [Gal. 5:22-23].

When we look at what it means to be a Christ follower, people tend to look at those who try to do good to others, as being wimpy and harmless. The world struggles with Christians who are more than simply nice.

Someone once wrote: *"Goodness is an intrinsic quality, focusing on the inner person. Its focus is on the kindly rather than the righteous side of goodness. The goodness that comes from God; showing itself in a spiritual virtue."*

In our reading Jesus tells the story of two men who are "church" people who walk by a half dead man as if they didn't see him laying there. Now while Jesus was teaching about REACHING OUT TO YOUR NEIGHBOUR, He was also showing how people who claim to do the things of God fall short of God's glory.

These two lacked the kindness and goodness we're looking at. There was no compassion, no willingness to help this guy. In telling the story Jesus then tells of another man who REACHES OUT: the Good Samaritan. He is not his neighbour. He's not even from Jerusalem. He's a Samaritan.

That's key in the story. Jesus tells us the guy from Samaria helps the guy from Jerusalem. That is what Christ followers should be doing. We should be REACHING OUT irrespective of who needs us.

If the world were filled with GOOD SAMARITANS, it would be a much better place.

Meditation: *When did I last act out of love to represent Jesus?*

DAY 6**Read:** *John 4:1-9*

It is our duty to reach out to those who have need for what we have received.

Earlier in John 3 we read of Nicodemus coming to Jesus. Nicodemus REACHED OUT to Jesus to help him with the inner conflict he was dealing with. Nicodemus knew that Jesus was from God.

But the Samaritan woman contrasts sharply with Nicodemus. While he was seeking; she was indifferent. He was a respected ruler; she was an outcast. He was a Jew; she was a despised Samaritan. Presumably he was moral; she was immoral. He was orthodox; she was unorthodox. He was learned in religious matters; she was ignorant. Yet in spite of all the differences between them, both had needs only Christ could meet. But Jesus doesn't deny either of them.

Jesus being truly human, experienced thirst, weariness, pain, and hunger. Of course He also possesses all the attributes of Deity. And so with His disciples in the city buying food, Jesus REACHES OUT to the woman. This in itself was culturally not acceptable. Jesus spoke to a Samaritan woman, whom He had never met. And the woman was shocked to hear a Jewish man ask for a drink from her.

Whenever we connect to what we've been created to do, there will always be success. We are called to preach, chosen to lead, but created to praise. The church community was created to be the educational institution for the Kingdom of God and its heartbeat is (evangelism) REACHING OUT.

Prayer: *Father Son and Holy Spirit help me live and love like You. Amen*