**Crossing the Street Series
Sermon 4: Being the Good News Together [Scott Pilgrim]**

Luke 10:30-37

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**Video version of this sermon:** https://vimeo.com/692103024
**Audio version of this sermon:** https://missioning.buzzsprout.com/1029217/10307871-sermon-being-the-good-news-together-scott-pilgrim-may-mission-month-2022

Hi, I'm Scott Pilgrim, the Executive Director of Baptist Mission Australia. And it’s great to share with you in our Crossing the Street series. Today we explore the theme Crossing the Street… Being the Good News Together

In 2019, pre COVID, in those days where it seemed like international travel was just something we took for granted, I found myself in New York. It’s one of my favourite cities in the world. And I had the privilege of spending a number of days with the team from Hope for New York - it’s an amazing partnership story.

Hope for New York was founded by the Redeemer church which is Tim Keller's Church in New York City. It was founded with a vision of partnership, rather than Redeemer and Redeemer members being out on the streets, engaged in ministry on their own, the Hope for New York vision was that Redeemer would spark partnership ministries across the five boroughs of New York City.

It’s an amazing story. As one church invests in projects, not their ow, as one church comes alongside and partners with other church communities and Christian organizations. As across the five boroughs of New York City, hundreds of projects are initiated, people are mobilised, partnerships are formed, local government and business get involved, 1000s of volunteers are engaged.

And it began with a spirit of partnership. That people would reach out together, to be the good news of Jesus, to embody the word and deed of Jesus in the communities of New York City. An amazing story.

Baptist Mission Australia has a marvellous partnership story. We partner with other Christian organizations and agencies around the world.

And we can only do what we do around the world because of the support of Baptist churches, Baptist associations, our national movement, but most of all individuals and families who are passionately committed to standing alongside our workers as they stand alongside others. Together, we are sharing the good news around the world.

Today, I'd like us to consider briefly one of my favourite stories in the Scriptures. It's the parable of the Good Samaritan. Many of you will know the story well. Many people from outside the church who know the story. I know my dad will do a good deed and he'll say, “I've done my good Samaritan job for the day.”

Jesus in this passage doesn't want to point us to just activity. He wants to point us to just lifestyles. What does it mean to embrace the way of the King? What does it mean to embody the good news of Jesus by word and deed? What does it mean for us to reach out and to engage with those in need in our community? But also in this passage… how do we do that together? Where does partnership fit into mission, into engaging with others, whether that’s around the world or across the street, with a heart in the hope of Jesus? It's a wonderful story.

It begins as a religious leader comes to trap Jesus. He wants to lead Jesus into a theological debate. But Jesus reframes the question around, “Who is my neighbour?” And He tells this very familiar, but scandalous and powerful story, a story that we can read with familiar eyes. But for first century listeners, this was a scandalous story. As He begins to unpack this parable, there was a Jewish man travelling between Jerusalem and Jericho, the road was called The Way of the Blood. It was a dangerous road to walk down.

Whenever I think of this road in this passage, I think about my son being in Bolivia a few years ago, and traveling, and he made contact with me and told me that he was going to be doing a bike ride down the North Youngest Road. That sounds okay. And so I looked up the North Youngest Road, and it's called the Road of Death. It's the most dangerous road in the world. It's 60 kilometres downhill with 600 metre drops with no guardrails and only room for one vehicle. It's become a place where young adventurers go for extreme sport and ride their bikes down. It's a challenging road.

And so was the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, people would often get attacked and robbed. The locals listening to this story knew that. And so Jesus positions this story around suffering. We'll come back to that. We'll come back to that in a minute. And so here is this man, he's been beaten, he's been robbed. He lies naked. The passage describes that he's left in the ditch, half dead.

And then here's the scandalous part of the story. Jesus says that two religious men came by, two religious men, one a priest and another temple assistant. And those listening in, leaning into this story would expect well, of course these two religious men will stop. But, of course they pass by.

They pass by. Are they frightened? Are they just too busy? Have they got other priorities? Have they been beating themselves on the street before? But they pass by, they fail to see and respond, as we would expect, to the need.

And then, of course, there's the Samaritan who passes by. And again, the first century Jew listens, a Samaritan, a Samaritan, someone hated by the Jews. An ethnic group ostracized, pushed aside called dogs, by the Jews.

Jesus tells His radical and powerful story that the most unlikely one stops, the most unlikely one becomes the hands and feet of good news, the most unlikely one stops and brings this man out of the ditch. We remind ourselves that God chooses ordinary people like you and I! God chooses me and ordinary people, in our churches across the nation, to reach out in our communities each day, bringing the love the grace, the goodness, the hope of God by word and deed. Today, He chooses you. And maybe today, you need to impress that upon your heart afresh, the mission of God in the hands of ordinary people.

I love what Martin Luther King Jr wrote about this passage, he said, the two religious man walked by and said, what will happen if I stop? The focus was on themselves. But he says the Samaritan man asks the question, what will happen? If I don't stop? What will happen if I don't stop? That's what Baptist Mission Australia workers ask around the world today, what will happen if I'm not in this place? What will happen if I'm not living in this community? What will happen if I'm not here as the hands and feet of Jesus?

The reality today that 40% of the world's population still live in countries where they have not heard the good news of Jesus, in their community, in their culture, in their language, in a way that makes sense to them. Things that we take for granted. And we want to be in those places, we want to have people living as good neighbours in those places. We want to be serving those communities in Jesus’ name. That's an act of justice, but it's also mission. And we do that in partnership together.

And so what happens? The Samaritan man sees the neighbour in the ditch, and he engages. It's one thing for us to see need. It's one thing for our workers to see needs around the world. It's one thing for you to see need in your local community. But are we willing to go hands dirty? Are we willing to engage? Are we willing to embrace the incarnational model of Jesus, of God who breaks into human history? Are we willing to actively engage in our local communities and invest and get our hands dirty?

What happens in the story? The man gets down in the ditch and he picks him in up and we read that he pulls oil on him, he bandages him up, he puts him on his donkey, he takes him to an inn. There is a sense of active engagement, there is cost. There is a sense that this Samaritan man compassionately needs to embrace the challenges, the suffering, the story of the man in the ditch.

I wonder today who might be people in ditches. I wonder in our culture today, in your local community who might be in the ditch. It might be people suffering from mental health challenges and the stigma that is placed upon them and our need to walk alongside them. It might be women and children escaping domestic violence. It might be people homeless in our community.

It could be First Peoples, Indigenous people in our community, living with disadvantage. It could be asylum seekers and refugees. It could be older people shut in during COVID, lonely and isolated. It could be your neighbour next door, yearning for hope and belonging, living with pain and disappointment.

I wonder who has God put into your world? Who are people in the ditches if we open our eyes afresh, if we step into our communities, recognising that God is already at work, and recognising that mission is not ours, recognising that mission is God's and He graciously invites us to join Him.

I wonder who's in the ditches in your local community today? And what is the difference that you can make, not on your own, but in partnership with others in your church community, in partnership with others in your broader community as we be the church, as we bring the hope, as we embody the good news of Jesus, by word and deed.

So the man acts compassionately, he engages, he invests, he brings the man to the inn. And often this is the part of the story that we might forget or lose. But I think it's a powerful part of the story. We often remember the good Samaritan, but let's not forget the innkeeper. They work hand in hand to bring healing, transformation of this man's life. The Samaritan needs the innkeeper, he moves on, he pays the innkeeper and the innkeeper then cares for the man to get back up on his feet again. The Samaritan and the innkeeper model for us collaboration and partnership, and I think Jesus wants us to see this in his powerful story.

We're better together. At Baptist Mission Australia, we can only do what we do around the world with our supportive partners who invest in our work.

You know, recently that came to light for me in a really powerful way. On one day, when I was in the office, I received a handwritten letter. You know, those things that we used to write many years ago. We got one in the mail recently at our own home, handwritten with a stamp on it, I had to explain to my kids what a handwritten letter was. There was a handwritten letter, it had been written by an old man in his 80s. In grief and pain, but also joy, he wrote to me to share the story that his wife had recently passed away. They'd been married 62 years.

There was a sense where he wanted to tell me that story, but more, he wanted to tell me that for all their married life, as an ordinary couple living in suburban Australia, passionately committed to the work of Jesus and their local church, that they had given financially generously and prayed for our work at Baptist Mission Australia. And he wrote, “I think my wife prayed for your workers in Africa everyday.” She had a heart for Africa.

It was an emotional letter. It was a beautiful letter. I wiped a tear away from my eye because I was reminded about the level of passionate commitment and partnership our people across our movement have with our workers.

And you know what, as I put that letter down, an email appeared on my inbox. I was struck by the physical letter, and now that email - a technological change as a sign of the changing world in which we live and how do we do mission differently today, but still with the same great news, the good news of Jesus. What was in the email? The email had a video attachment that one of the teenage sons of Melanie and Tim had filmed in Malawi.

What was the story? There was simply Tim talking to the camera, telling a story of partnership. For more than 10 years Tim and Melanie have been in Malawi. Their goal, their vision in more recent years has been to pass on leadership, to pass the baton to first generation Yawo believers. That they might build faith communities, that they might lead mission, that they might be front and centre. And that Tim and Mel would literally step back in a mentoring support and coaching roles. It’s disciple making at its best.

And Tim tells the story of a young man who had just led his first Bible study. He hadn’t come to Christ through Tim or Mel or through Australian workers. He come to Christ through Yawo believers, sharing their story, pulling him up out of the ditch. He had a tough life story. People had invested in him. They believed in Him, they had supported him. He knew of a God who seemed distant and detached, but he had a yearning for something more.

And Dougal came to faith. And Tim tells the story of Dougal leading a Bible study, first Bible study, nervously, his wife sitting with him, sitting in a circle, leading this Bible study in his language, in his culture, in a way that made sense to his people. And for some reason, he chose a passage of Ezekiel. And Tim tells the story of stepping back, of literally stepping back. And as he stepped back, Tim, with tears in his eyes, said, Scott, “This is what it was all about. We, as Aussie Baptists had played our part in God's mission that Yawo would come to Christ.” And here was an example of that disciple making in action, but more, here was an example of partnership.

Go back to the letter. Go back to the letter of that lovely, generous, prayerful, faithful couple who gave generously, who prayed every day for the team in Africa, who'd been praying for Tim and Mel and our work in Africa before that, and the reality that God was at work in Africa well before Baptist Mission Australia turned up.

It’s a beautiful story of partnership, that Tim and Melanie and the team in Malawi can only do what they do when people like this older couple, when people like you and me, as co-workers in the good news, invest together in what God is doing around the world. In Africa, in Asia, in Outback Australia and Urban Australia, as our intercultural workers serve with you as partners in the good news.

But more than that, we want to cheer on what you're doing in your local communities. This whole series of crossing the street is that reminder that we are called to mission together locally and globally. And we are at our best when we are crossing the street, in Jesus’ name in our community, as well as supporting each other, that others might cross the world to cross the street with the hope of Jesus.

So we go back to the story. And the Samaritan man has embodied what it means to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our beautiful and broken world. And that story could be told in a myriad of ways today, as ordinary Aussie people like you and me step out in our community to be the hands and feet of Jesus. But of course, it just wasn't the Samaritan man. Let's remember the innkeeper. Let's remember partnership. Let's remember collaboration, and our call to be on mission together.

The story finishes, where Jesus having reframed the whole conversation, with the religious man probably thinking, “I wish I never asked the question about who is my neighbour”, the crowd listening and leaning in, wanting to hear more from Jesus. And the story finishes where Jesus says to the religious leader, well who is the good neighbour in this story? And the man walks away clearly knowing that it was a Samaritan one.

We look at this story in the light of Jesus. And we see that the good neighbour is that. Jesus was the one who follows the way of the King, the one who embraces humility, the one who gets down into ditches, the one who gets His hands dirty, the one who lifts others up, the one who comes alongside, the one who speaks hope, the one who gets their hands dirty in bringing the good news to life. In your community, in communities around Australia, in communities around the world.\

We can only do what we do at Baptist Mission Australia because we're in partnership together. In Romans 16. Paul finishes this great letter to the Roman church, a letter full of theology, telling us so much about grace and Jesus and sin and the salvation story. But it finishes with a PS. It finishes with another handwritten letter.

I remember as a kid writing letters to my cousins. I would write a letter, they would write back, I would write a letter, they would write back. It was who could have the most PS’s. PS: I love you, PPS: I miss you, PPPS: I can't wait to see you.

In Romans 16, we get Paul's PS. His postscript to this grand letter, or he moves away from some of the grand themes, to remembering people.

And in 16 verses, he names 27 people. He celebrates co-workers, he celebrates his friends, he celebrates those far and close. He celebrates mission together. He celebrates partnership. And at the end of that list of 27 names, ordinary people on mission together, a beautiful picture of partnership. How does he finish that chapter? He says, Glory to God. Glory to God. When we step out in mission together, what are we doing? Lesslie Newbigin says, “When we step out in mission together, we are seeing a doxology to God.” We worship God as we partner together and embrace His gracious invitation to mission.

The powerful, challenging, scandalous story of the Good Samaritan, a story that reminds us that we are called to cross the street, that we have the invitation to stoop down, to be in ditches, to get our hands dirty, to bring the good news to life, to partner together, to cross the street as partners in the good news.

Thanks for your great partnership with Baptist mission Australia. We're cheering on your local church community. We look forward to engaging more with you. We would love to invite you to pray for our workers to pray for our team to invest in our mission that we're sharing together.

You can find out more at www.baptistmissionaustralia.org

Thanks for sharing in our Crossing the Street series. May we go in Jesus’ name, to cross streets to bring the hope of Jesus as ordinary people, the mission of God in the hands of ordinary people. God bless you.