

1. It is the love of Christ that motivates us to assist others:
“For Christ’s love compels us” (2 Corinthians 5:14)
Christ’s love provides us with an opportunity to love our neighbours and it is also our great motivation.

- A compulsion is a forceful pull. Christians become merciful by the outpouring of the love of the Holy Spirit into our spirits. Romans 5:5 states that we can truly love a person only through the love of Christ.
- Christ’s immense mercy compels us to dedicate ourselves towards the welfare of the ostracised persons who live without any hope, overcoming all social barriers that prevent us from doing so.
- Christians should break the silence regarding issues affecting such persons and advocate for their needs. We must also create awareness among them because we are the salt and light of the world.

2. “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you” (Romans 15:7)
Rejection crushes man and it also has harmful repercussions. Thereby by accepting someone, we give him hope.

The Effects of Rejection

- It discourages human beings
 - bitterness
 - It can result in attempts of suicide
 - It causes psychological injuries
 - It brings about illness
 - It brings about decay of self-confidence and dignity
 - Those affected are not able to engage in their day-to-day work. People become life-long enemies because of rejection. Look at the story of Hagar.
- The Positive Effects of Acceptance
- They are encouraged
 - Their vitality and productivity increase
 - Their dignity increases
 - Their capabilities grow

- They grow healthy
 - Their longevity improves
- The biblical basis that calls for acceptance of others is “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Romans 15:7). By accepting one another like Christ accepted us we are glorifying Christ.

Principles We Must Follow in Accepting Persons

- Romans 5:1 – Assisting others in their moments of weakness
 - Romans 5:2 – Building instead of breaking
 - Romans 14:3 – Avoiding the temptation of judging or accusing others
- Christ accepted us unconditionally. While we were in sin, He accepted us. We should not treat persons according to the categories we place them in.
 - The main concept of Christ’s message is peace and coexistence. Reconciliation plays a great part in the ministry of Christians. We should accept persons experiencing rejection and bring them towards reconciliation.
 - As Christians we should accept other’s human rights and provide them with the space to enjoy their freedoms.

Dedication

Today let us make a new dedication. As a symbol of our dedication let us light these candles at the foot of the cross.

Prayer: Pray for physical, psychological and spiritual healing of persons living with leprosy and other such illnesses in recollection of their afflictions and the various problems they face.

The congregation will stand to sing a hymn of love while the leaders will place the lighted candles at the foot of the cross, signifying their dedication.



LEPROSY SUNDAY



SERMON NOTES:

SERMON NOTES: LEPROSY SUNDAY
THEME: ACCEPTANCE AND LOVE

Preparation:

- Share the plan of the service you are about to do with your cell-leaders. Make a wooden cross of approximately 4 feet with two pieces of recycled wood. Place the cross in a sand-filled container and place this in front of your church. The container holding the sand must have room to hold candles too.
- The cell-leaders will be representing the congregation. Please prepare a candle for each cell-leader.
- Sing hymns which will praise the love of God and encourage one another during the service.

Background:

Mother Theresa once said, "Do not wait for leaders: do it alone, person to person". She has shown us by her example what responsibilities and duties are. This is the main essence of the Gospel. As a community that loves our nation, we are gathered to pray for its healing. Love is not a mere word or an expression of feeling; there are many duties and responsibilities embodied in love.

Is health a duty or a ministry?

Today, at this service, we will come to understand that it is a combination of both. I think, health is a duty as well as a ministry. Christians are called as salt and light to show Christ's love to others. (Matt 5:13-16)

Florence Nightingale once said, "To understand God's thoughts we must study statistics, for these are the measure of His purpose. We must see the problems people in the society face as a great God-given opportunity to share His love".

The bible teaches that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. This gives the human bodies the highest honour. The World Health Organisation defines health as physical, mental and social well-being.

It is the vision of our national Ministry of Health to build an economically, socially, mentally and spiritually healthy nation. This is a holistic concept relevant to the soul, spirit and body. It is everyone's responsibility to make this concept a reality in one's country, village and community. As the Church of Sri

Lanka how could we contribute towards bringing about this reality? What should our dedication be? Is health a duty? Or is it a ministry?

Do you know that someone falls prey to leprosy in Sri Lanka every eight hours? Do you know that even though leprosy is completely curable, ignorance, negligence and social ostracism result in those affected not seeking treatment? Do you know that thereby leprosy is slowly raising its head again in Sri Lanka?

What is our attitude towards persons afflicted with such illnesses? How do you respond to such persons?

As leaders of the Church and as its believers, we should be sensitive caregivers for such persons. Then we can be productive Christians in the society we live in. Even though persons living with leprosy are not banished from society today, as in the past, most of them face discrimination and isolation.

Who is your neighbour? Luke 10:25-27

The Story of the Good Samaritan

Who does Christ challenge today through the story of the Good Samaritan?

He challenges us modern Christians. This parable shows us how we Christians should reach out to those in our society who are trampled upon and afflicted by illness. It is the responsibility of us Christians to heal the sick, to nurse them back to health, to fight for their fundamental rights and by advocating for their cause, change the circumstances they live in. The priest, the Levite and the scribe – all persons who held high positions in the society – had obstacles in following the teachings of Christ. They were unwilling to do anything that was not a part of their duties.

Let us analyse the way in which the Samaritan loved his neighbour.

- He put his own needs aside.
- He went to the suffering Jew
- He understood his condition
- He approached him with compassion
- He tended to his wounds
- He placed the injured man on his donkey and took him to

an inn

- He took him to the best place that will provide the needed care
- He spent a night with him
- He paid for the expenses
- He ensured that the innkeeper looks after his guest
- He promised to pay the innkeeper whatever expenses incurred in caring for the man's needs
- He was confident that the innkeeper can look after the man.

There are a few main characters in this story

In this story who is it who provides us with the example to love our neighbours like the Good Samaritan? Jesus Christ. Who are the priests, Levites and scribes of today? The Christians among us of different faith-levels who are unable to follow this teaching of Christ.

What do the inn and its keeper represent? Us modern Christians or the Church.

What was meant through the action of paying the innkeeper and the intention of repaying him for any other expense incurred? It is the strength, power, graces and blessings bestowed upon us by Christ to heal and protect crushed and broken persons.

Look at those who are around you today. Even though they are against your faith, Christ reminds us through the parable of the Good Samaritan of the call extended to all Christians to love them with neighbourly love.

Think of the way in which Jesus responded to the man affected by leprosy as recorded in Matthew 8:3, Mark 4:41 and Luke 5:13. "Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy" (Matt 8:3).

"Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31). This is known as God's golden rule. How can we put this golden rule into practice? Mark 12:13 records that there is no greater commandment than this. In Matthew 22:40, Jesus says that the entire law and all prophecies are based on this commandment of love.

In acting thus, we must concentrate on two basic principles.