

The Good Samaritan

The partner stained glass window to 'The Faithful Steward' is 'The Good Samaritan' – the story told in *Luke 10: 25 – 37*. Although this is one of the most familiar stories in the New Testament, its very familiarity can lead to misinterpretation. As a child I was puzzled that the Samaritan's 'good' behaviour was unexpected. To my young mind *The Samaritans* was like the *RNLI*, or the *RAC*, so of course a Samaritan would help someone who had been attacked by thieves! But to observant Jews in the first century, the people of Samaria were considered 'untouchable'. The concept of a 'good' Samaritan, would certainly have raised eyebrows when Jesus told this parable.

The story begins with violence; a traveller is the victim of a brutal mugging on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Vividly, the stained glass artist pulls us straight into the drama. Our attention is drawn to the two figures at the bottom left hand side; the pallor of the 'half dead' man contrasting with the Samaritan's blood red robe.



Clearly the man from Samaria has been tending his 'patient' for some time. He has given up his cloak to keep him warm, and applied a bandage. He supports the injured man's head with one hand, the other holding a flask from which he has just administered either oil or wine. On the face of the Samaritan is an expression of infinite concentration and tenderness. All thought of his own business has been put on hold for the moment.

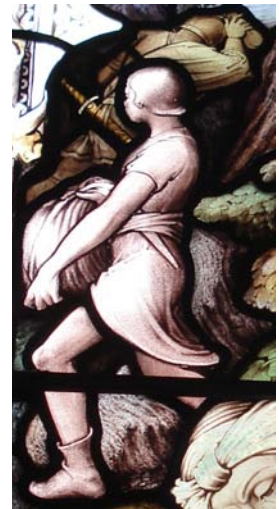
Quite different are the expressions on the faces of the two priests who have 'passed by on the other side'. In the middle distance, the figure in blue is self consciously reading as he walks away. Perhaps this is an excuse for not noticing anything amiss, or perhaps because he is on his way to perform priestly duties in the temple at Jerusalem.





The man in gold does at least give a backward glance as he sweeps past, but it is a look of cold distain.

Looking at the window as a whole, in a complex design, the artist uses two distinct time-lines. Starting in the right hand panel, a curve runs from the red rock of the path through the two priests, and crosses to the top left hand side, to the thieves running away with the traveller's belongings.



This line takes us back through time and also links the inaction of the priests and the initial crime of violence.



The balancing line starts in the present, where the donkey grazes. Clock-wise from the donkey's saddle, the curve goes round almost 360 degrees until a splash of red leads it away, up to the top right hand-side.

This line takes us into the future, where Samaritan, donkey and injured traveller will be welcomed at the inn.



At the centre of this picture, where these two curves bisect, lies a moral crossroad.