

MAY-AUGUST 2022



# New Daylight

Sustaining your daily journey with the Bible



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# New Daylight

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Edited by Sally Welch

May–August 2022

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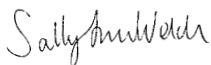
## Sally Welch writes...

I have been the editor of *New Daylight* since 2016. I have commissioned and edited 20 issues, trying to meet the challenge of producing Bible reading notes which are relevant, interesting, challenging, supportive and encouraging. Above all, my aim has been to share the good news of the gospel in a way which deepens our relationship with Jesus Christ. I have been helped and supported in this aim by a wonderful team of writers, and I am profoundly grateful for their contributions. I have also been both challenged and supported by the many letters I have received from readers, some of whom have become regular correspondents. Whenever I commission a new writer, I remind them that our first priority is you, the reader, and that whatever we write should be done with you in mind, and I hope that I have been successful in communicating this to you.

As much as I have enjoyed this work, it is now time to hand over the task. I do so reluctantly, but knowing it is the right thing both for me and, more importantly, for *New Daylight*. The new editor is Gordon Giles, canon chancellor of Rochester Cathedral. He is an excellent choice, and I am sure that *New Daylight* will be in good hands with him. I will continue to contribute as a writer, sharing the journey as we go forwards.

This issue begins with my writing on 'Standing still', continuing with our theme for this year: 'Look back and remember, he was with you; stand still and realise, he is with you; walk forward and trust, he will be with you always.' I share with you my reflections on the habit of Christian mindfulness – being aware of Christ in the present moment and celebrating his love. I end with a favourite quote of mine: 'Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love' (Teresa of Ávila).

It is my prayer that the reflections in *New Daylight* have enabled God's presence to 'settle into your bones' and helped your soul to freedom and that they will continue to do so.



# The parables of Jesus

*'I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.'*

MATTHEW 13:35 (NRSV)



Jesus told many stories. Unlike argument, which encourages taking a position or defending an existing view, stories simply 'are'. They invite us in. They enter the imagination, are held in memory and open their meanings over time, as we are ready. They are well-suited to reveal deep wisdom of life and heart.

Over the next fortnight, we'll be looking at a few stories from Luke's gospel. They are parables of relationship: love of neighbour and God's love for us. They all challenged the religious leaders of the day.

We begin with the good Samaritan. We meet a lawyer deep in the tradition of intellectual debate. By answering him with a story, Jesus encourages him to respond with empathy and action. The context of their exchange is illuminating. Seventy disciples have just returned from mission. Jesus is listening as they report lives transformed. They tell of action to help people, moved by the Spirit. He rejoices that these things are hidden from the wise and revealed to infants. 'Just then' the lawyer stands up and asks his questions, and the story unfolds. Luke balances all this talk of action with the story of Martha and Mary, where Mary sits at Jesus' feet, listening as a disciple. Both are important.

The second week is devoted to three parables of lost things. Here too the setting is important. In the previous chapter, Jesus is eating at a Pharisee's house where he speaks of the kingdom as a feast. Then, he is surrounded by those described as 'tax collectors and sinners'. He welcomes them and eats with them. I believe that as they eat together, these stories are told. In each story, God's joy is revealed by feasting and celebrating.

All look deep into the human heart, encouraging us to examine our motives and our actions. They help us know the love of God and what it means to love our neighbour and brother. All invite us to join our lives with the great prayer, 'May thy kingdom come on earth as in heaven.'

May their slow revelation offer us light to live by.

ANDREA SKEVINGTON

## Debate and lived experience

At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants... Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?'

We begin with an interruption, one that reveals two different ways of living a life of faith. Jesus is full of joy at how God's love transforms lives, of the kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven. Then a lawyer stands up seeking an intellectual debate about salvation, rather than noticing this good news here and now. He may be hoping for a satisfying game of theology tennis – back and forth – but such games do nothing to touch the heart and transform the life.

The life of faith can become dry. It can become a pursuit of correct doctrine only and can lose the very life it seeks. Take a pause to reflect on times when churches you know have overflowed with God's love in a practical way and when they may have become absorbed in argument, looking in. I can remember when a church I was part of showed much love: gave small gifts to people in the street, helped the housebound or prayed with people outside. Such things may seem very small miracles, but they were part of an outflow of life.

Jesus' response to the lawyer is respectful, but Jesus does not join the game. He does not use force of will or mind. He is not concerned with winning, or even having, an argument. Perhaps there is a lesson here for us when we are tempted to join in debates on social media or argue people into right thinking. Jesus was giving his attention to the kingdom work of goodness and healing and hope. Perhaps we can, too, grounded in a deeper wisdom of the way of love.

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*'Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?  
On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand...  
O simple ones, learn prudence' (Proverbs 8:1-2, 5).*

ANDREA SKEVINGTON

## Do we put limits on love?

[The lawyer] 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 neighbour as yourself.’ And [Jesus] said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’

We give time to this question of who is our neighbour. Maybe as we go deeper with these verses, we can allow it to open our eyes and hearts. The lawyer knows the way to life is love. However, his self-justification reveals love as rote-learned knowledge, rather than heart’s wisdom. Being right doesn’t help him love. Quibbling over love shrivels it up.

So what does loving our neighbour look like? Jesus will show us as we move through the story. Within it, we will see a practice we can work on. For now, let’s turn again to ‘And who is my neighbour?’

At this point, it looks like the reason for the lawyer’s question is to limit his circle of compassion, to find out who must be included and who can be excluded. Such constraints on love seem against its very nature, but so often we do exclude. We reach the limits of our love. We may be short of time, energy and resources. Love may take us to very difficult places, and we hold back. We may have categories of people we overlook. The story to come will stretch our circle to love more widely. But it is a big stretch. I believe we can take time with this work and learn wisdom alongside love.

I learned much about the practice of loving my neighbour by becoming friends with a homeless young woman in our small town. Unlike the man in the story to come, her wounds were unseen. I found that I had to set aside my solutions to her problems and respectfully listen and learn from her. In time, she found a flat and work and community. I believe compassionate listening helped her take those steps for herself.

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*May we expand our circle of compassion and see neighbours everywhere.  
May we live today from a grounding of love.*

ANDREA SKEVINGTON



## Where we give our attention

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.'

What sort of things have, in the past, changed our views? Sometimes, compelling evidence will do so, but I also find my empathy is broadened by stories, whether from literature or life. Listening to people share their stories helps me see through their eyes.

Here, Jesus begins his story with this abrupt account of violence. Yet our concern is not with the robbers. Jesus gives them little attention – just this one verse, this list of cruelty. Imagine if we were telling this story. Imagine reading it in the newspapers. The robbers, and the details of the crime, would loom large. Jesus has a lesson for us in how we give our attention. Our attention is powerful; it shifts our internal landscape. It is naturally drawn to danger, threat and difficulty, and our internal territory can become a fearful road. Of course, we need to listen to our fears and take sensible actions, but runaway worry does not help us. In this crime story, Jesus gives due acknowledgement to the robbery and to the terrible harm it does, but that is not where he lingers.

The lack of detail about the wounded man has a different effect. There is nothing to identify him, and therefore we can all identify with him. It could be any one of the people listening; it could be us. How would we feel if it happened to us? Story opens our imagination and, through that, compassion and empathy. We can walk in this man's shoes. Our concern is with his suffering, and so we hope that someone might help him. As this man is Everyman, our circle of compassion is expanded. Whoever he is, we hope help comes.

As we wait with the wounded man, dare we open our hearts to him, despite the presence of fear and worry? Or perhaps we see ourselves coming along the road, wondering if we would have the courage to help? Or perhaps we are feeling helpless and waiting for those footsteps.

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*'I cry aloud to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy hill' (Psalm 3:4).*

ANDREA SKEVINGTON

## Religion can let you down

Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

These religious people also receive minimal attention. They appear briefly, passing by the injured man and through the story. I wonder if the lawyer's hopes rose at the mention of a priest and Levite. He may have expected them to be heroes of the story. Many of us will have felt let down at times by the actions of those who should have cared for us. Whether it is church leaders or others with responsibility, it can feel like betrayal. We may need to seek wise counsel and tend our wounds. It may take time and prayer.

On the other hand, we can represent God's people to those in need, and maybe we have let others down. It's uncomfortable to consider that we may not act with goodness or love, even if we are 'right'. If our interpretation of law or scripture does not lead to greater love of God and neighbour, perhaps we could think again.

There may have been reasons the priest and Levite walked by – reasons sanctioned by their faith. They may have been following purity laws, which forbade the touching of a body or blood. Maintaining personal purity may distance us and even harden our hearts. It can lead to walking by on the other side. As can fear.

Yet every day we see pain and suffering – too many people, too far away to be helped. What are we to do? I think our prayerful, humble, loving response may call us to help where we can, to be aware of our own limits and to not overlook those directly before us.

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*'You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts' (2 Corinthians 3:2–3). May I allow my heart to be tender enough to live out the law of love today.*

ANDREA SKEVINGTON

## A practice to expand compassion

But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 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. 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.’

Now we reach the story’s turn. At last, someone has come to help. But that someone is a Samaritan, a generational enemy, despised. Are we humble enough to look up to someone so unexpected?

We have asked what love looks like. We have asked how to cultivate love. Here Jesus sets out a process we can learn from. The Samaritan comes near, sees and is moved with pity. We can cultivate the practice of compassion by coming near, truly seeing and allowing ourselves to be moved. And, once moved, our heart overflows into action. Our daily lives bring us into contact with people. Dare we draw near?

As the robbers’ actions were listed, so now the Samaritan’s are – meeting the harms done point for point. Here is a model for dealing with pain, whether that of others or ourselves. For each wound, we show loving kindness.

Our capacity to be moved to pity, having hearts of flesh, is a sign of life and love in this story. It is also the spring from which loving action flows. It is a precious thing and can be cultivated. Important as giving money to charity is, there is something sacred and transforming about humbly serving and helping as this Samaritan did. I know my encounters with people living on the streets have changed me in ways that giving money alone cannot. We need to be wise and careful, but perhaps, rooted in the love of God, we can take a step.

Draw near. See. Be moved by pity. Go and do.

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*As we read these verses again, where do we see ourselves? The wounded man, the Samaritan, the innkeeper or someone watching? May God give us wisdom and courage as we seek to live from love.*

ANDREA SKEVINGTON

## Go and do

**‘Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’**

We return to the lawyer’s question. It has a different weight now. It is no longer abstract, but a matter of life and death. Jesus subtly changes it. ‘Who is my neighbour?’ implies we can pick and choose. Jesus, by contrast, asks who *was* a neighbour to the wounded man. Neighbour is our identity, shown by what we do. Jesus might be implying that we are all neighbours to each other, and what matters is acting from that true nature. Perhaps, like the love of God, this love is not limited. Mercy is not a matter of law; it is an impulse we can cultivate. And mercy is not a matter for debate or analysis. It is demonstrated in heartfelt kindness.

And so the debate ends. For all so far has been words and talk. Now, Jesus tells the lawyer to go and do. Here is a deep and genuine challenge. The path of life looks like this – it looks like bending down to bandage someone’s wounds; it looks like courage, mercy and humility; it looks like living out love. In order to even begin, I have found I need to be rooted in forms of prayer which cultivate love and acceptance of myself and others. I find daily prayers of blessing nurture loving kindness, as I gradually expand my circle of blessing. I find imaginative reading of scripture, too, cultivates compassion.

Like this: read the reflection below slowly, twice. The first time imagine you are the one lying wounded on the road speaking these words. The second time, think of the Samaritan, showing the face of God to the wounded one. Dare we ask for courage to go and do likewise? Could we be the goodness and mercy that attends someone’s path?

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*Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me... You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life’ (Psalm 23:4–6).*

ANDREA SKEVINGTON

## Who is welcome?

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, ‘This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.’ So he told them this parable: ‘Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices.’

Jesus welcomed sinners – so the religious leaders complained. Jesus ate in all kinds of company, unconcerned for his reputation. His goodness took no pride in piety. He spent time with people most religious folk avoid. I have been seeking to change my own behaviour in the light of this. Increasingly, I see the Spirit working in a wider community, moving people to care for each other and creation. During the pandemic, our town has worked to share food in a kind of distributed kingdom feast.

Jesus challenges the religious leaders. Shepherds bring home lost sheep without condemning them. God values the lost, the rejected and the wanderers. Sometimes it seems that religious institutions do not. Jesus does not reject sinners; he welcomes them. He eats with them. God does not reject us but finds us and brings us home rejoicing. God trusts the righteous, leaves them and goes out of his way to seek the strays. You can’t be a good shepherd without getting dirty, without risking thorns and wilderness, without long searching. Jesus led this hard life of a shepherd for our sakes.

So where are we in the story? It is easy to start as lost sheep, but gradually shift to be those who keep apart from others. So today, can we delight in the welcome Jesus gives? One way of doing this is to stop comparing ourselves to others, and simply rejoice that Jesus loves us, carries us home on his shoulders and welcomes us to his feast. Can we expand our vision to include people we might have overlooked? Can we, too, welcome as Jesus does?

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*‘He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young’*  
(Isaiah 40:11, NIV).

## As precious as a silver coin

‘Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.” Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.’

The second short parable is also a question. Questions, as well as stories, open us to consider new things. Here we consider a woman searching for a lost coin. Jesus is gently expanding our vision. This is one of the few parables where a poor woman represents God. A poor woman hunting for one of her precious coins is an image of God’s love for us.

As the crowd listened to this story, they will have felt her anxiety at her lost savings, her provision for hard times. But I wonder if they were also moved to think that, in this story, they are the treasure. They are so precious that God seeks them out.

The coin can do nothing to help itself be found. Sometimes, we feel like that. Sometimes, we can feel in such a dark place that we can’t pray or seek help. Even so, we are God’s treasure. He rejoices over us in love. In comparison to the vastness of God’s love, our lostness is as small as a silver coin. Perhaps, in time, we can find this love and welcome is the route to our healing. Jesus, the light of the world, is a lamp held up to find us in the darkness.

The woman invites her friends and neighbours to celebrate. How precious it must have been for those listening to know that God celebrates them. Notice how this joy is shared, not solitary. Kingdom joy connects us to others, helps us expand our welcome. The question is, will the religious leaders take part in this joy?

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*As we read this parable again, see what strikes you. Perhaps you feel lost in a dark place or forgotten in a dusty corner. Imagine yourself as seen by God, as a bright coin worth searching for, worth rejoicing over.*

ANDREA SKEVINGTON



*Enabling all ages to grow in faith*



Anna Chaplaincy  
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## 100 years of BRF

2022 is BRF's 100th anniversary! Look out for details of our special new centenary resources, a beautiful centenary rose and an online thanksgiving service that we hope you'll attend. This centenary year we're focusing on sharing the story of BRF, the story of the Bible – and we hope you'll share your stories of faith with us too.

Find out more at [brf.org.uk/centenary](https://brf.org.uk/centenary).

To find out more about our work, visit  
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**New Daylight** provides four months of daily Bible readings and comment, with a regular team of contributors drawn from a range of church backgrounds. It is ideal for anybody wanting an accessible yet stimulating aid to spending time with God each day, deepening their faith and their knowledge of scripture.

### Readers' comments on New Daylight:

'Thank you for all you do to make every issue so readable and enlightening, giving us the opportunity to get closer to God.'

'Thank you to all the wonderful writers who bring scriptures to life and make them relevant for us in the here and now.'

'I just wanted to say how much I appreciate the notes for helping to keep me going with reading the Bible and shedding light on demanding passages.'



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