



‘Love your neighbour’

By Andrew Carr, Reader



Those of you who know me will know that I am a long-time Star Trek fan. The image on the left is a still from an Original Series episode called “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield.” It tells of two aliens, Bele (Frank Gorshin - left) and Lokai (Lou Antonio - right) and their ingrained mutual loathing of one another. A script quote sums it up:

Bele: I am black on the right side!

Captain Kirk (William Shatner): I fail to see the significant difference.

Bele: Lokai is white on the right side. All of his people are white on the right side.

Consequently, in Bele’s bigoted mentality, Lokai is inferior... and, as is explained in the episode, therefore fit only to be enslaved and/or used as cannon fodder in wars... Lokai has tried (and failed) to lead insurrections against this oppression, whilst Bele has pursued him to bring him to justice for doing so. They force the Enterprise to travel to their homeworld, Charon, only to find that everyone there is dead – countless unburied bodies, cities in ruins. Their mutual loathing has destroyed them all: learning nothing, Lokai then Bele flee to the planet to continue their now pointless pursuit...

So why choose it for a mid-week reflection..?

The episode was made in late 1968 against a background of racial oppression and violence by American police, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy had both been assassinated, and there had been protests and riots across many cities including Washington DC in what was a Presidential election year.

Here now in mid-2020, there is racial oppression and violence by American police, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor amongst those killed, and there are protests and riots across many cities including Washington DC in what is a Presidential election year.

Jesus was once asked by a teacher of the law (Mark 12:28-34 – [link below](#)) which commandment was the most important – by this time it’s believed that there were over 600 laws within Jewish belief – Jesus’ answer reduced them to just two principles.

The first: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’

The second: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

This second commandment/principle is deemed so important it is repeated some nine times in various books of the Bible. The commandment may or may not be the source of the phrase: ‘Treat others as you would like others to treat you’, which also known as The Golden Rule. All of us want to be treated fairly, equally and kindly regardless of who we are... and we all should be. It should not matter what colour, creed, gender, culture we each of us are... it is an

enduring tragedy within the human race that that is not the case... racism, sexism, fascism, communism should have been consigned to the dustbin of history long ago.

If we all loved our neighbours as ourselves, I suspect those mentioned -isms would be history... For example:

- Loving your neighbour is accepting who you are and who other people are. As Shakespeare put it in Hamlet: 'This above all to thine own self be true.' (I.iii). Every one of us is a unique individual – something that should be celebrated and embraced rather than used as an excuse to divide and to discriminate. How dull it would be if we were all exactly the same...
- Loving your neighbour is to serve, respect and be there for them (as you would hope that they would serve, respect and be there for you), especially those who are in need in our midst. This has been so evident during the pandemic lockdown and I sincerely hope continues once the lockdown is lifted...
- Loving your neighbour is to be a good listener and a respecter of boundaries. You will always feel like someone cares for you when they genuinely listen to you. Listening is a conscious choice you have to make, especially in this world of social media when you can say what you like hiding behind your phone, laptop etc. Listening and talking person-to-person without technology – having a chat – is a very different experience and a much more rewarding one.
- Loving your neighbour may lead us to serving our community and others. Are we good neighbours/servers? How do we share our time, talents and treasures with our community? Are we involved in building our community, after all if we aren't why should anyone else be? Are we active in our community or just a spectator looking on?

Until we meet again, keep safe, keep well.

AMEN

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+12%3A28-34+&version=NRSVA>