



**Service of Reflection  
Christian Aids 80<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary  
Westminster Abbey  
London 12 June 2025**

**HOPE: GOD`S LIFE-LINE**

**Luke 10: 25-37**

Eminent Leaders  
Dignitaries  
Church Leaders  
Sisters and Brothers,

It is a great honour and joy to be with you today on this very special celebration of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christian Aid. Thank you so much for the opportunity to share with you today on this milestone achievement in the life, work and witness of your organisation over these many years of fruitful and incredible service to the world.

I bring you the greetings and blessings of the World Council of Churches and the entire fellowship joins me in expressing our congratulations on this special anniversary.

Many years ago, I was a young life saver on a beach. At the end of the day, we had a mock demonstration for the public, but it was intended brush up on our skills and to test out our life saving equipment. One of the lifeguards would go into the sea and act as if he was in difficulty and another lifeguard would go to rescue him. On one occasion it was my turn to be rescued. I went quite far in and when my colleague reached me, he was completely exhausted. So instead of saving me he started to throw his weight on me and dump me underwater.

I managed to get out of his grip and indicated to the colleagues on the shore to pull him out. I decided to swim to the shore, but I was nearing a whirlpool which was known to claim many lives. I knew I was not going to make it so I prayed to God, in fact I bargained with God to save me, saying I would serve him for the rest of my life. It was a hopeless situation and just as I was about to give up the rope that was pulling my colleague came between my legs and under my body. As you can guess, I grabbed on it for my life and wasn't going to let it go, I was eventually pulled to safety. At that moment when hope was almost gone, God sent me a lifeline.

The story of the Good Samaritan speaks of the injured man left on the roadside from Jerusalem to Jericho, beaten, robbed and half dead. The priest walked past and refused to get involved probably thinking that the man was dead, and if he was, then it would make him ceremonially unclean and prevent him from his duties in the temple. This meant more to him than the dying person needing help.

The Levite passed by and refused to stop probably fearing that this was a decoy for the other robbers waiting to pounce upon him if he stopped to help. And then a Samaritan, an unlikely person to stop because he was prevented from customary laws from touching a Jew, saw this injured man, had compassion on him, nurtured his wounds and took him to an inn for further assistance, even agreeing to pay the bills. This Samaritan man was God's lifeline for this injured and dying man.

We are living in a world of suffering, pain and struggle. People are dying daily from poverty, hunger, malnutrition, sickness, diseases, wars, conflicts, forced migration and climate catastrophe and many people just walk past these issues. We remain silent, passive and simply accept that this is the new normal.

It is just the way it is. Look at Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Colombia and so many other countries in the world. Thousands of people are dying, and nobody seems to be able to intervene to stop these senseless killings. Political leaders no matter how super powerful they claim to be cannot seem to stop these destructions, dangers and deaths. We have become numb, detached, indifferent and disinterested in the sufferings of others. We feel safer to mind our own business, go on our own

way, cling to what we consider important, refuse to step out of our own comfort zones, we choose to not get involved. And all the while, people are suffering and dying. How can we remain silent? How can we walk on the other side? How can we see people suffer violence, hunger, death and not be moved? What the world needs today is God`s lifeline.

And, if the truth be told, this lifeline often does not come from sources we would expect it to come from. Not usually from the rich and powerful, not from the politically empowered, not from the legalistically religious, not from the so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good, not from the priest interested only in ceremonial rituals and activities, not from those who have the potential to do some good. Instead, God`s lifeline, servants and assistants come from the least likely, the racially despised, the economically struggling, the politically oppressed, the poor, sick and suffering. Why? Because they know what it means to suffer. They know what it means to hurt and be in pain. They know what it means to go to bed hungry. They know what it means to face violence, darkness and death. They know what it means to lose a loved one. They know what it means to hold out hope in the face of hopelessness. These are God`s lifelines to the world. They are the neighbours. The ones who show mercy and kindness, says Jesus, these are the good Samaritans.

Thank God for the good neighbours and lifelines. They are the ones prepared to disrupt their comfort. They are the ones holding out hope in despair, faith in fear and light in darkness. They are God`s hands, feet, presence, power and grace to the world. They are the ones who love and serve others not for name, fame or fortune but simply because they care enough to get involved. They love enough to make a difference.

The story of the Good Samaritan tells us three things in the actions he performed. The first is that he showed **concern**. The amazing part of this story is that he stopped, not like the priest and the Levite who passed by. We need to learn to stop and see what is happening around us. We need to have empathy. We need to be the good neighbour.

The second thing the Samaritan did was to **cross boundaries and barriers**. He did not see a Jew and say this is the one who hates me, I should not help him. He did not see one who disrespected his race or identity or discriminated against him. No, all he saw was a fellow human person in need. He did not allow his prejudices, animosity, or ill-feelings to get in the way. He crossed all

barriers to reach out and restore the injured man even when it was a potential risk to himself.

Our world today is so full of hatred, revenge and wickedness. We care for our own as we look down on others as if they are not human beings. We fight to protect our own, we go to wars, violence, ethnic cleansing and justify all our actions to make evil look good. We have forgotten how to stop, show concern and cross our own boundaries and narrow-mindedness to see human beings as human beings. More significantly as people created in the image of God. Instead of being God's lifeline we inflict suffering and death on others.

The third thing the Samaritan did was to show **compassion**. Compassion is not pity. Pity says "Oh, shame see the injured man" and walks right pass like the Priest and Levite did. But compassion stays, it pitches a tent and remains there as long as it takes. The Samaritan bent down, bandaged and nursed the wounds of the injured man, put him on his animal and took him to the inn. He was God's lifeline to this injured man.

We thank God for people and organisations that are prepared to be God's lifelines in the world. Today we thank God for Christian Aid and for its work over the past 80 years bringing hope, affirming and sustaining life of the injured and dying in our world. Amidst all the challenges you have faced over these years you have never ceased to stop to show concern, to cross boundaries in who you help and to show compassion. You have pitched your tent, and you stay as long as needed to help restore and heal the broken and suffering people in the world. You know the power of unstoppable hope.

Yes, we are living in a world in which hope is receding all the time. People are giving up. They think things will never change, never get better. We are overcome by a spirit of darkness, fear, despondency. However, as Christians we cannot succumb to this hopelessness, like Abraham we must hope against hope.

The basis of our hope is our faith in God. Like faith and love, hope is an eschatological gift. The scriptures make clear that we should put our hope in God. Hope in God, though, is not passive resignation but working with God as agents of transformation and change. It is working for justice, peace and love on earth. In the context of *receding hope* Christians are called to *redeeming hope*. Hope that is grounded in the redemptive work of Jesus who

through his death and resurrection has given us a new hope, a *reconciling hope*, a hope that brings and holds all things together in the Risen Christ. Reconciling us with God the Father, the Son also reconciles us with one another and with all creation.

It is this kind of hope that we have and share as people of faith. It is this inspirational hope that drives the work and witness of Christian Aid. It is this unstoppable power of hope that leads us on today, tomorrow and every day despite the challenging times. It is this hope that enables and empowers us to be God's lifeline in the world rescuing those drowning in sin, suffering and pain. So, despite the context let us dare to hope, let us live in hope, let us be instruments and agents of hope. Let us rest in the unstoppable power of hope. I hope you get this message.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Congratulations on your 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary and best wishes for the future as you keep hope alive.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jerry Pillay', with a stylized, flowing script.

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay  
General Secretary  
World Council of Churches