

# Love Thy Neighbour

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*Of the Seventy*

Compassion is an attribute of Christ. It is born of love for others and knows no boundaries.

This morning, I invite you to join with me on an African journey. You won't see any lions, zebras, or elephants, but perhaps, by journey's end, you will see how thousands of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are responding to Christ's second great commandment to "love thy neighbour" (Mark 12:31).

Imagine for a moment the rural, red dirt of Africa. You see from the parched and barren earth that rain has not fallen in any measurable quantity for too many years. The few cattle which cross your path are more bones than flesh and are being driven by a blanket-covered Karamojong herdsman who, with sandalled feet, trudges on in hope of finding vegetation and water.

As you navigate the rough and rocky road, you see several groups of beautiful children and wonder why they are not in school. The children smile and wave, and you wave back with a tear and a smile. Ninety-two percent of the youngest children you see on this journey live in food poverty, and your heart groans with anguish.

Ahead, you see a mother carrying a carefully balanced five-gallon (19 L) container of water on her head and another in her hand. She represents one of every two households in this area where women, young and old, walk more than 30 minutes each way, each day, to a source of water for their family. A wave of sorrow washes over you.

Two hours pass and you arrive at a secluded, shady clearing. The meeting place is not a hall or even a tent but rather under a few large trees providing shelter from the sweltering sun. In this place, you notice there is no running water, no electricity, no flush toilets. You look around and know you are amongst a people who love God, and you instantly feel God's love for them. They have gathered to receive help and hope, and you have arrived to share it.

Such was the journey of Sister Ardern and me, in the company of Sister Camille Johnson, our General Relief Society President, and her husband, Doug, and Sister Sharon Eubank, director of the Church's Humanitarian Services, as we travelled in Uganda, a country of 47 million people in the Africa Central Area of the Church. On that day, under the shade of the trees, we visited a community health project that is jointly funded by the Church Humanitarian Services, UNICEF, and the Ministry of Health of the Ugandan government. These are trusted organisations, carefully selected to ensure the donated humanitarian funds of the members of the Church are prudently used.

As heart-wrenching as it was to see malnourished children and the effects of tuberculosis, malaria, and incessant diarrhea, there came to each of us an increase of hope for a better tomorrow for those we met.

That hope came, in part, through the kindness of Church members from around the world who donate time and money to the Church humanitarian effort. As I saw the sick and the afflicted being helped and lifted, I bowed my head in gratitude. At that moment, I better understood what was meant by the King of kings, who said:

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you ... :

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in” (Matthew 25:34–35).

Our Saviour’s plea is to “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16; see also verses 14–15). In that far-flung corner of the earth, your good works brightened the lives and lightened the load of a people in desperate need, and God was glorified.

On that hot and dusty day, I wished you could have heard their prayers of praise and gratitude to God. They would have me say to you in their native Karamojong, “Alakara.” Thank you.

Our journey reminded me of the parable of the good Samaritan, whose journey took him on a dusty road, not unlike the one I described, a road that went from Jerusalem to Jericho. This ministering Samaritan teaches us what it means to “love thy neighbour.”

He saw “a certain man ... [who] fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead” (Luke 10:30). The Samaritan “had compassion on him” (Luke 10:33).

Compassion is an attribute of Christ. It is born of love for others and knows no boundaries. Jesus, the Saviour of the world, is the epitome of compassion. When we read that “Jesus wept” (John 11:35), we are witnesses, as were Mary and Martha, of His compassion, which caused Him first to *groan in the spirit and be troubled* (see John 11:33). In a Book of Mormon example of Christ’s compassion, Jesus appeared to a multitude and said:

“Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, ... or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you. ...

“... And he did heal them every one” (3 Nephi 17:7, 9).

Despite our every effort, you and I won’t heal everyone, but each of us can be the one who can make a difference for good in the life of someone. It was just one lad, a mere boy, who offered the five loaves and two fishes that fed the five thousand. We may ask of our offering, as Andrew the disciple did of the loaves and fishes, “What are they among so many?” (John 6:9). I assure you: it is sufficient to give or to do what you are able and then to allow Christ to magnify your effort.

On this point, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland invited us, “rich *or* poor, ... to ‘do what we can’ when others are in need.” He then testified, as I do, that God “will help you and guide you in [your]

compassionate acts of discipleship” (“Are We Not All Beggars?,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 41).

In that distant land, on that unforgettable day, I stood then and stand now as a witness of the soul-stirring and life-changing compassion of members of the Church, both rich and poor.

The parable of the good Samaritan continues as he “bound up [the man’s] wounds ... and took care of him” (Luke 10:34). Our Church humanitarian efforts find us quickly responding to natural disasters and binding up the world’s widening wounds of disease, hunger, infant mortality, malnutrition, displacement, and the often-unseen wounds of discouragement, disappointment, and despair.

The Samaritan then “took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him” (Luke 10:35). As a church we are grateful to collaborate with other “hosts” or organisations such as Catholic Relief Services, UNICEF, and Red Cross/Red Crescent to assist in our humanitarian endeavours. We are equally grateful for your “two pence” or two euros, two pesos, or two shillings that are easing the burden that too many around the world are having to bear. It is unlikely you will know the recipients of your time, dollars, and dimes, but compassion does not require us to know them; it only requires us to love them.

Thank you, President Russell M. Nelson, for reminding us that “when we love *God* with all our hearts, He turns our hearts to the well-being of *others*” (“The Second Great Commandment,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 97). I testify that each of us will have an increase of joy, peace, humility, and love as we respond to President Nelson’s call to turn our hearts to the well-being of others and to Joseph Smith’s plea to “feed the hungry, clothe the naked, provide for the widow, dry up the tear of the orphan, [and] comfort the afflicted, whether in this Church, or any other, or in no church at all, wherever [we find] them” (“Editor’s Reply to a Letter from Richard Savary,” *Times and Seasons*, Mar. 15, 1842, 732).

All those months ago, we found the hungry and the afflicted on a dry and dusty plain and were witnesses to their pleading eyes for help. In our own way, we *groaned in the spirit and were troubled* (see John 11:33), and yet those feelings were tempered as we saw the compassion of Church members at work as the hungry were fed, the widows were provided for, and the afflicted were comforted and their tears dried up.

May we be forever looking to the well-being of others and show in word and deed that we “are willing to bear one another’s burdens” (Mosiah 18:8), to “bind up the broken-hearted” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:42), and to keep Christ’s second great commandment to “love thy neighbour” (Mark 12:31). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.