

LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR CHRISTIANS

MARKING HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2016



INTRODUCTION¹

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) takes place on or around 27 January every year, the date of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Soviets. It is a time to remember the millions of people who have been murdered or whose lives have been changed beyond recognition during the Holocaust, Nazi Persecution and in subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. On HMD we can honour the survivors of these regimes and challenge ourselves to use the lessons of their experience to inform our lives today.

Last year, Holocaust Memorial Day 2015 marked significant and solemn anniversaries: 70 years since the liberation of Auschwitz and 20 years since the genocide in Srebrenica. Remembering can be painful, and, as survivors die out, it takes on a different urgency. But the need to look back must be balanced by the call to attend to the present. What this means can differ from context to context. The HMD Trust points out:

For some, the focus needs to be on individual acts of kindness that signify we will not turn a blind eye when those around us face prejudice or victimisation:

'We need to take into account the lives of other people who live around us. We need to look after each other.'

Kemal Pervanić

For others, the focus is on more recent genocides:

'Unfortunately, genocide is happening again. People haven't learnt. That won't stop me pleading for tolerance.'

Otto Deutsch

¹ With material reproduced with permission from hmd.org.uk and especially http://hmd.org.uk/sites/default/files/hmd_2016_-_dont_stand_by_-_theme_vision_0.pdf

The theme for HMD 2016 is the imperative: Don't Stand By! Again, from the HMD Trust website:

The Holocaust and subsequent genocides took place because the local populations allowed insidious persecution to take root. Whilst some actively supported or facilitated state policies of persecution, the vast majority stood by silently – at best, afraid to speak out; at worst, indifferent. Bystanders enabled the Holocaust, Nazi Persecution and subsequent genocides. They tolerated cultures where increasingly punitive and oppressive discrimination and hostile policies could separate populations and ultimately lead to ethnic cleansing, destruction and attempted annihilation of communities.

Those who did not 'stand by' whilst persecution took place were not only bravely acting as resisters and rescuers of individuals, they were also taking action against prevailing views and beliefs that saw some people's lives as worth less than others'.

People who did not 'stand by' in the Holocaust and in subsequent genocides were able to assist in many ways. Some brave people saved lives, giving a home or shelter to individuals and families who tried to escape. Others organised rescue efforts, arranged safe passages or accompanied children to safety.

Elie Wiesel has written powerfully about the impact of bystanders:

'I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.'

Thus we are encouraged to reflect not only on the fate of victims, but on the distinctive role of bystanders, as well as the vocation of rescuers, and those who demonstrate resistance and change.

The Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) offers these liturgical materials for Christians who wish to mark Holocaust Memorial Day 2016 within their worship. Naturally, worship leaders can be selective in what they use, and can adapt for their own purposes. We also provide some commentaries on Biblical passages, from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. These include the gospel readings for the Sundays on either side of Holocaust Memorial Day according to the Revised Common Lectionary. However, other readings are also offered, as it is recognised that many may mark the Day with a special service, or adapting an existing non-Eucharistic service.

Biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise stipulated.



LITURGY

Gathering

God walked with us in the cool of the day,
and we were ashamed and hid ourselves.
God showed divine glory on the holy mount,
and we were afraid and did not go up.
God came to us as one of us,
and we pushed him away to the cross.
O God, come, heal, and teach us now
**that we don't walk away
from our needs or our joys.**

Opening Prayer

God,
we thank you that
the nature of your love is to stay with us,
even as you see us without illusion.
We your children know we harm others,
and we stand by, while others do harm.
In your mercy,
 bring all bystanders to insight and repentance;
 hold all rescuers by your Spirit's strength;
 and empower us all to resistance and challenge,
as we long for the ways of peace.
Amen.

Confession, Absolution

Father, you make us and you keep us in being.
But we are ungrateful and do what comes easiest.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Jesus, you show God's will to stay with us as friend.
But we run away out of fear and of habit.
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Spirit, your fire gives true light and courage and vision.
But we prefer comfort or meaningless squabble.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

eternally with us and eternally beyond,
free *you/us* from your sins,
from all that makes *you/us* flee from life,
and comfort *you/us* with divine, abiding love.
Amen.

Intercessions

One of these refrains may be used between the prayers.

God, you call us to life and to love
give us the courage to hear.

or

God, you forgive, but never indulge
may we see your world as it is.

Fiercely loving God,
may your provocative Spirit
challenge, cajole and discomfort your Church:
that it does not stand by
in the face of injustice and coldness of heart;
that it does not busy itself to keep out of the way;
that it does not fall in love with its own words;
that it be the Body of Christ.

Fiercely loving God,
may your inspiring Spirit
chasten and renew your Church:
that it shows humility and love to the first-called children of Israel;
that it repents of all teachings of contempt and untruth;
that it prays for reconciliation
between all who claim the faith of Abraham.

Fiercely loving God,
may your pacifying Spirit
hover over and uphold your Church:
that it sees your image in all human beings;
that it is open to ways of faith which, though different, bear fruit;
that it is as willing to learn as to teach.

Fiercely loving God,
may your provocative Spirit
challenge, cajole and discomfort the powerful in the world:
that they recognise the weight of their responsibilities;
that they look out for the weakest and smallest in their care;
that they seek peace with freedom, and justice with forgiveness;
even at the cost of their own privilege.



Fiercely loving God,
may your eternal Spirit
enliven all those whose hearts grow dull:
that we take care always to remember the evil of the Nazi Holocaust;
that we spurn all hints of antisemitism and racism;
that we nurture the memories of victims, survivors and their families.

Fiercely loving God,
may your eternal Spirit
always inflame our hearts to acknowledge all truth:
that we take care to remember all other genocides,
in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Darfur and elsewhere;
that we oppose and resist all terror and crimes of hate.

Fiercely loving God,
may your provocative Spirit
challenge, cajole and discomfort the comfortable in this place:
that we work with all for the common good;
that we seek out those who fear they cannot belong;
that we live simply, that others may simply live.

Fiercely loving God,
may your inspiring Spirit
chasten and renew your Church:
that it becomes a place of healing, and of welcome to those unwell...
that it becomes a place of fullness of life, where mourners too are at home...
that it be the Body of Christ.

Fiercely loving God
show your fierce love
to all who do harm,
and those who stand idly by,
that they and we turn from our ways;
and to all who rescue, resist and challenge,
that they and we stay true to that vocation;
that violence and injustice may cease.

Sending Out Prayer

May God,
who is Teacher, Healer, Friend and more,
who stays with us
and with those forgotten and despised in the world,
challenge, cajole and discomfort us out of all complacency,
and strengthen, console and guide us into ways of peace and delight,
that wars may cease,
the unsettled find a home,
and the truth be spoken
in all gentleness and clarity
[and the blessing of God...]
Amen.

NOTES FOR PREACHERS

1. Luke 4.14-21: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me'

(This is the Gospel for 24 January 2016 according to the Revised Common Lectionary)

Good news for the poor.
Release for captives.
Recovery of sight for the blind.
Freedom for the oppressed.

These are, in most ways, good things; they are healing. Not quite in all ways: a blind person may insist that physical blindness is a way of being differently able. But if we think of spiritual blindness – and find a better way of putting it – then indeed Jesus here offers us powerful liberation from what harms us. Many commentators insist that Luke intends us to take this teaching or preaching from Jesus, standing as it does near the beginning of his Gospel, as his manifesto, or even his 'mission statement'. Let us attend!

There are two levels of problems. The first is with the text itself. What Luke gives us is neither the Masoretic/Hebrew text, nor the Septuagint/Greek text for Isaiah 61.1-2a. For both also include, between the reference to the poor and the captives, mention of the healing of the broken-hearted. The omission seems strange, unless Luke (or Jesus of course) was working with a different version of Isaiah, which, in their day, is a real possibility. The promise of recovery of sight to the blind is in the Septuagint, but not the Masoretic text. Interestingly, both versions of Isaiah go on (Isa 61.2b) to clarify that the 'year of the Lord's favour' is also one of 'vindication'. That, here as often, the New Testament seems to have recourse to the Septuagint raises many questions. Among them is the propriety of speaking of the first part of the Christian Bible as 'the Hebrew Bible' as many in Jewish-Christian relations are in the habit of doing. But little is at stake for our immediate purposes.

The greater problem is that it is not self-evident that the Spirit of the Lord, resting on Jesus, did effect such momentous good things. True, even Jesus' fierce critics, in antiquity as well as in the modern world, did and do concede that he was a healer. But more is envisaged here than a string of healings, however welcome in their own right. As for the 'day of favour' of the God of Israel, inasmuch as Jesus brings that about (and Christians will insist he did), it remains hidden and paradoxical in form. Yet from earliest days, and to the present, Christians have been moved to compassion and action by Jesus' words, quoting Isaiah, and have found strength to work sacrificially for God's purposes as outlined here. Who is to say what such action has achieved, and how the world would have been without it? The call to act 'today' rings out through the centuries.

In any reflection on the inadequacy of being a bystander, and the sacred need to be a rescuer and/or a resister, it is vital to remember that the Reign of God is not with us in all its visibility, fullness and power. This means: to act right is to undergo risk, real risk, risk of harm from which there is simply no guarantee that God will shield us. Modern Christians are used to hearing this. Indeed, the very vulnerability of God is preached, often, and not least in Christmas-Epiphanytide. But the danger is that it stays at the level of rhetoric. We need candidly to admit that risk and vulnerability are unwelcome things which necessarily provoke anxiety in most of us. We need the Church (in the broadest sense) to teach us not to be afraid, and to train us to act *nevertheless*.

Refer to the '*Life Stories*' section below, for examples from a 'great cloud of witnesses' of those who knew of risk, pain and loss in the context of genocide, including those who resisted valiantly and in ways which changed the world.

2. Luke 4.21-30: 'No prophet is welcome in his home town' (*This is the Gospel for 31 January 2016 according to the Revised Common Lectionary*)

First Commentary

This is a difficult text. It is fast moving (and so accessible to those who like an action-movie gospel-reading), and/but we cannot plot all the moves. It seems we have a dialogue and a narrative with gaps we must fill in. In this, we might almost feel we are reading the Gospel of John! After his sermon (the gospel for the preceding week), all speak well of Jesus. Yet he, for reasons not given in the text, provokes their wrath by putting words of criticism into their mouths. They chase Jesus to the edge of a cliff. Yet somehow he 'passed through the midst of them'. How?

The problem is the content of the words Jesus puts into others' mouths: he seems to predict that they will criticise him for not performing miracles for them. On the surface level, the people would, in these circumstances, have a point. For Jesus has just taken on Isaiah's mantle to be a world-transforming liberating, healing figure. And remember: his interpretation is that Isaiah's prophecy has come to fulfilment 'today'; no future tense. So, is Jesus *unable* or *unwilling* to act in role, to demonstrate acts of wonder for his own people? We are not told.

Some offer a psychological, even a psychoanalytical interpretation: Jesus is in his home town, surrounded by his family, where he was known as the little boy Jesus, as the text itself implies. He has not yet fully 'differentiated' himself from them, so as to fully inhabit his adult vocation. After all, after this incident, in Capernaum (where we may suppose he is known as an adult in his own right), he does swiftly perform an exorcism (already by v. 35). This, then, is a useful insistence on the full humanity of Jesus, in need of the same process of maturation as the rest of us. Is there here a parallel with John, where Jesus tells his mother (note) 'my hour has not yet come' (John 2.4)?

The awkwardness of the text can provoke different thoughts. Can we be rescuers and resisters, even with the possibility - or rather likelihood - of failure? Do we act only when reasonably confident of success? Is there, put it the other way round, ever a case for prudent restraint? It may be of import that, while Christianity in the ages of persecution, came to hold martyrdom in high regard, and even as something to be desired, rabbinic Judaism came to strictly delimit the occasions on which martyrdom was required; in all other circumstances the priority is the preservation of life. (The Talmud in Sanhedrin 74a sanctions martyrdom only when one would otherwise be compelled to commit idolatry, murder or illicit sexual acts.) There is surely no right answer to such a dilemma. We need to be 'formed' into people of virtue and prayer, so that the decisions we make, we make in good conscience.

Second commentary

A different interpretation of the controversy which Jesus begins stresses that he refers to stories in the Old - or *Original* - Testament where the recipient of a miracle is not a Jew but a gentile. Some have gone so far to as to see this as programmatic: already here at the beginning of Luke we have a foretaste of his second volume, Acts, where the action moves from synagogue to the gentile community. This is of a piece with that interpretive key known as 'supersessionism' or 'replacement theology', according to which all the failures and curses of the Hebrew-prophetic tradition remain applicable to the Jewish people, while all the promises and blessings are transferred to the Church. In truth, this was always a misreading of the prophetic tradition, which is never systematic and cannot be systematised: both judgment and mercy apply to the same people, held in tension; that is the point.

That Jesus here seeks to take on the supposed 'narrow and exclusive ethnocentrism' of the Judaism of his day is a related argument. This too does not work. The *Jewish Annotated New Testament* comments at this point:

Jews in general had positive relations with Gentiles, as witnessed by the Court of the Gentiles in the Jerusalem Temple, Gentiles as patrons of synagogues (7.1-10), and Gentiles as god-fearers [sic] (Acts 10). They also expected the redemption of righteous Gentiles, who would come streaming to Zion, as Zech 8.23 states... The rejection of Jesus is not prompted by xenophobia; it is prompted by Jesus' refusal to provide his hometown with messianic blessings.²

3. 1 Peter 2.4-12: 'A Royal Priesthood and a Holy Nation'

(This reading includes the principal verses to be used by those marking the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 18-25 January 2016 – see <https://ctbi.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2016/>)

The passage moves, with hymnic majesty, from references to the people – the readers or hearers – to Zion and its cornerstone – and back to the people. It does so by offering a 'medley' of Hebrew-biblical references or citations. Among them – the list is not exhaustive – are Isa 28.16; Ps 118.22; Isa 8.14; Deut 10.15; Hos 1.9, 10; Ps 39.12. (Quite possibly, given the late date of 1 Peter, some New Testament echoes are intentional as well.) To modern eyes and ears, trained in historical-critical methods, this may grate. Where, after all, is the care about the authorial intention of the Hebrew writers? But such a compilation will be instantly recognisable to any familiar with rabbinic methods, according to which apparently unconnected texts can indeed be linked if the resonances of the language itself allow it. So not just in terms of content, but at least sometimes in terms of method, Jews and Christians are two people 'divided by a common tradition'.

Are we rivals? That seems to be the import of the text. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, rejected by some builders (otherwise not identified), and the readers-hearers are the building(s), the Temple (by implication) or the whole of the city of Zion. Thus the readers-hearers are 'a royal priesthood and a holy nation, God's own people' (v. 9). Indeed, since they have been called 'out of darkness' (v. 9), they can be given instructions regarding their conduct 'among the Gentiles' (v 12), to whom presumably they no longer belong. Here, surely, is a claim to be the people of the biblical covenant, to be by implication – although it is still significant that the phrase is not used – the new Israel (cf. Gal 6.16). Only by recognising this awesome vocation can the people bear the persecutions which are current or likely (see e.g. 1.6; 3.14; 4.12; 5.10).

If this is right, such a claim needs to be kept in creative tension with other New Testament texts, supremely Romans 9-11, where Paul wrestles with his understanding of the status before God of the Jewish people who do not embrace Jesus as Messiah. That wrestling is for Paul too personally involving to lead to a neat answer. But it does include the insistences: 'I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means!' (Rom 11.1a) and 'the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable' (Rom 11.29). Thus there remains the option of taking the affirmation in 1 Peter as saying that the Christian community can be 'a new Israel', alongside the 'old Israel', which is not 'old' in the sense of 'defunct' and 'decaying', but rather with its own integral, differently graced means of self-renewal. In any event, to be in any sense whatsoever an 'Israel' is not some badge of privilege and reward. To be a holy nation and a royal priesthood is to bear a godly burden. It is also 1 Peter which insists: 'the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God' (4.17). Rather than preening our sense of biblical heritage or entitlement, our energies are and always were better

² Levine, Amy-Jill and Brettler, Mark Zvi, 2011, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 107.

served on acting in such a way as, by God's grace, to become worthy of the covenant.

4. Genesis 4.1-9: 'Am I my brother's keeper'

(This and the following passages are selected for those who wish to put together a 'bespoke' service on the theme of Holocaust Memorial Day 2016: 'Don't Stand By')

'Am I my brother's keeper?' is a question which has found its way into our everyday speech. Even apart from the Genesis account, it challenges us not to ignore others' need, not to be a bystander, but to choose to act. What it evokes can be called many things: enlightened self-interest; the categorical imperative to see the other as always an end and never a means; solidarity; fraternity. It is a call to do the right thing by our neighbour. As such, that the phrase yet resonates with people who have next-to-no relationship with the Bible is wholly welcome. If you want an accessible text for our themes, this can be it. For those who do want to dig into the Bible text itself, however, things become problematic. The Hebrew (Masoretic text) is difficult, which is perhaps recognised by the Greek (Septuagint) which diverges significantly.

A literal translation of Gen 4.7 might read:

Is it not if you cause good,
uplift!
And if you do not cause good,
to the opening sin [is] roving;
and to you [is] its urge
and you yourself will[?] rule over it.

We do not know quite what Hebrew text the Septuagint translators had. But what they made of it was, again, literally:

[Is it] not if you have offered it rightly,
but you have not divided it properly,
you have sinned?
Be still.
To you [is] his/its submission
and you yourself shall rule over him/it.

We set this out merely to show the extent of the difficulties of getting to the 'plain meaning' of the text. It may be that the Greek is already an attempt to give some rationale to God's otherwise apparently arbitrary decision not to 'have regard for' Abel's sacrifice (whatever that means): he did perform the ritual badly in one regard. Both versions can be taken as exhortations to Cain to try again: one way or another, if you get it right, either you or the sacrifice or both can be accepted; only if you go on failing does sin become an issue. But the problem is that the Hebrew can as naturally be taken to mean: 'whether you do good... or not... sin is crouching'. In other words, like the story of Eden, this text cannot be taken as giving an 'explanation' of sin and evil in the world: as the serpent is 'just there' in the garden, so sin is 'just there', lurking. Sin and evil are mysteries and we risk misdirecting our energy, or offering unhelpful platitudes, if we forget this.

There is another major difference between the Hebrew and the Greek: the Greek has Cain saying to Abel: 'Let us go out into the plain' (v. 8), which most English translations pick up on; the Hebrew is 'And Cain said to Abel his brother, and it happened when they were in the field'. That is it. That is: no speech whatsoever is recorded. Another intractable problem. But perhaps also quite telling. Can we not say that many a conflict, be it in a family, community or between nations, has origins which no one can authentically, objectively remember? Is this not why so much time is spent insisting that 'my narrative' of what went on is the right one, and yours is wrong? Because something really is at

stake. The ability to say that the other started it cannot be taken for granted, but must be worked at, preserved, honed. How many conflicts, then, would benefit – not necessarily come to an end, but nevertheless be nudged in the right direction – if all parties embraced a certain, limited agnosticism about how we come to be where we are, and focus instead on what a solution might look like?

5. Luke 22.39-51: Gethsemane

The story of Jesus' prayer-vigil in Gethsemane/Mount of Olives and the disciples' failure even to keep awake can be another story of the human tendency to be bystanders – although in this case even standing proved too much. It is Luke, who in general has a positive view of human beings and their potential, who alone explains that the followers of Jesus were sleeping 'because of grief' (v. 45, *apo tes lypes*), rather than laziness or indifference, or just plain 'weakness of the flesh' (cf. Matt 26.41; Mark 14.38).

Of import in this story is that when the disciples do abandon the role of those who are present but inactive and uninvolved, the action which one of their party takes is wrong action: one of them turns directly to violence, and cuts off the ear of – of all people – a slave (v. 50). Jesus commands that he desists, and heals the slave. But it is hard to deduce that Jesus is in all ways a pacifist. Not only has he, during his ministry, said nothing at all critical of the stories of Israel's wars in his Scriptures, he has just called on his followers to procure swords (vv. 36-38).

There are surely lessons here for us and for all human beings throughout time. If the corrective to standing idly by is to proclaim 'something must be done', and then do the first thing that comes to mind, or the obvious thing, or the thing which offers some emotional release or satisfaction, it is likely we will nurture a cycle of retribution, which, while being definitely active rather than passive, is the kind of activity which makes things worse. True resistance requires a subtle blending of passionate anger, to be sure, with that quality which the monastic Fathers and Mothers called *apatheia*, meaning not apathy, but the ability to detach from one's passions, to be sensitive to one's own capacity for a range of destructive tendencies, from self-righteousness to excesses of rage.

Those who are looking for a more yet more challenging reading might look to **Genesis 34**, on the rape of Dinah. Reference can and surely must be made to the way the whole story is told within a patriarchal frame: the rape victim is treated as little more than a possession and ornament of the male agents. This can tell us that we too might be 'bystanders' in ways of which we are totally ignorant, for the dynamics which stop us seeing the injustice done are part of 'the air we breathe'. But, in that Jacob's sons respond with subterfuge and then slaughter, here is a powerful story of 'resistance' which gets it wrong, which descends into vengeance or love of violence. That this comes from 'our own' tradition (even if from a text not many may know) can make this point all the more powerful.

6. Luke 10.25-37: The parable of the good Samaritan

This parable must serve as the archetypal story on our theme: 'Cross over the road, my friend!' Do not stand by, but act, care, pay attention to the person in need, be your brother's - and your sister's - keeper. These are noble imperatives. But can we admit that the story can raise awkward questions at the back of our minds? Is the meaning of the story that we must always attend



to anyone with whom we come into contact with an immediate need? Such people are not rare. How then can life be lived? What plans might we make for anything?

Perhaps aware of this difficulty of interpretation, preachers often focus on the three characters, the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan. Typically, the first two are portrayed as acting as 'by-passers' (we might say) because of a supposed concern for their ritual purity, which, according to Lev 21.1-3 and Num 19.11 is undone by contact with a corpse. Sometimes this point is extended to imply that Jesus sought to undermine the whole system of Temple-based purity, even though the story occurs in the middle of Luke, which both begins and ends with genuinely devout people finding a home for their sincere devotion - in the Temple (Luke 1.5ff; 24.53).

The gospel itself does not mention ritual purity at all. There are many reasons why such it is unlikely to be the real concern.³

1. The restrictions on contact with a corpse have nothing to do with determining whether a person is in fact dead or alive; to believe that it ever took precedence over preserving life implies Judaism must be a very life-denying faith, which is an unworthy assumption to make.
2. Judaism has always understood that sometimes some commandments must be set aside to fulfil others. Later Judaism insists that even a high priest can contract uncleanness to attend to a neglected corpse (Mishnah Nazir, 7.1, about 200 CE).
3. Num 19.11 states that contact with a corpse renders a person ritually impure *for seven days*. It then sets out a means of becoming pure again. In any event, this purity has nothing to do with goodness or righteousness. It simply means one is or is not fit for Temple activity. Ritual impurity is a perfectly natural and normal part of life, for both genders.
4. Lev 21.1-3 refers only to the Aaronite priesthood, not to Levites. The priest is coming down from the Temple to Jericho. Ritual cleanness would not have been a concern for him then.

By reading a concern for ritual purity (better: fitness-to-practise) into the text, the likely real meaning – and shock factor – is lost. For it is the case that when thinking of worship in Temple (and, later, synagogue), the congregation can be thought of according to a hierarchy. (To stress: this determines a role, not one's goodness or worthiness.) There are indeed priests (*Cohanim*), Levites (*Levi'im*) and other Jews (*Yisrael*). Thus what stands out is that rather than the expected 'Israelite', the person who acts aright is a Samaritan. And Samaritans are not some 'outcasts' or even simply the 'alien'/'other' people; they are quite specifically those held to have a counterfeit version of the true faith - those with whom the Jews were in *mutually antagonistic* rivalry. Amy-Jill Levine counsels:

To hear the parable in contemporary terms, we should think of ourselves as the person in the ditch, and then ask, 'Is there anyone, from any group, about whom we'd rather die than acknowledge, "She offered help" or "He showed compassion"?' More, is there any group whose members might rather die than help us? If so, then we know how to find the modern equivalent for the Samaritan.⁴

7. Luke 19.1-10: 'Come down, Zacchaeus'

The story of Zacchaeus offer a slightly more challenging or nuanced story for our theme. Zacchaeus does not so much stand by as hide away as far as possible - while still wanting to be part of the event. What is different is that the event itself is a good one: Jesus himself passes by, as part of his

³ These remarks are indebted to *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, p. 123, and Levine, Amy-Jill, 2006, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus*, HarperOne, New York, pp. 144-149.

⁴ Levine, *Misunderstood Jew*, p. 149.

popular ministry. Jesus for his part is not neglecting his duty, but living out his vocation. These significant differences notwithstanding, Zacchaeus' initial half-courage-half-timidity surely has things to show us. Can we not say that we all want to be part of what we think is the right way to live, but we also want to shield ourselves from others' judgements (whether deserved or not)?

Zacchaeus has the blessing of an unavoidable encounter with the one he is drawn to, Jesus. He is called down from his tree. One time-hallowed interpretation of this is that it is not just a physical act. Zacchaeus is summoned down, from the place of glorious isolation to the earth – which is common in both senses – shared and ordinary. He is humbled; he is called to be humble. (That Jericho is over 250 metres below sea-level may add to this point.) Zacchaeus is however not humiliated; rather he experiences repentance, restoration and joy. Life is not always like that; the gospel does not pretend that it is. But such a turnaround of spiritual fortune – such healing - can happen. Indeed, in one way or another it is likely to be part of our story. We give thanks for it, when we experience it.

Also in tradition, Zacchaeus has another name: he is Matthias (cf. Acts 1.15ff). If we allow this, it follows that he has a further story as a faithful disciple of Jesus. Matthias is described by Peter as one of those 'who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us' (Acts 1.21). So this would mean he moved from half-courage-half-timidity to fullness of courage, to courage which took the form of sticking power. We for our part must remember that the task of rescuing and resisting is hard, and can be terrifying. But one message of this good-news story is that if we start with only half-courage, we need not be in a bad place.

LIFE STORIES

These persons' stories are narrated and illustrated on the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust website (<http://hmd.org.uk/resources/theme-papers/hmd-2016-dont-stand>).

Vera Schaufeld, one of the children rescued by Sir Nicholas Winton.

Susanne Kenton, one of the children rescued by the *Kindertransport*, and given a home by **Sydney and Golda Bourne**.

The *Sonderkommando*, who were forced to work in the gas chambers and their resistance to the Holocaust.

Rudolf Vrba, who escaped from Auschwitz-Birkenau to try to warn Hungarian Jews about the Holocaust.

Zahava Kohn, a Holocaust survivor who was imprisoned in Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen.

Raphael Lemkin, who escaped the Holocaust and established the concept of genocide in international law.

Johann 'Rukeli' Trollmann, a popular German Sinto boxer, who was discriminated against, marginalised, sterilised, and finally deported to a concentration camp, where he was murdered.

Anna Maria 'Settela' Steinbach, a Romani girl photographed being deported to Auschwitz, known as 'the girl with the headscarf'.

Helene Melanie Lebel, one of approximately 250,000 people murdered by the Nazis because they were physically or mentally disabled.

Carl Wilkens, the only US citizen to stay in Rwanda during the 1994 Genocide.

Nisad 'Šiško' Jakupović, who was imprisoned in the notorious Omarska Concentration Camp in Bosnia along with three of his brothers.

Abdulsalam Abdullah, who experienced violence and imprisonment at the hands of the Sudanese government in their attacks against the black population in the Darfur region of Sudan.

ACTIVITY

The Life Stories can be printed off (see the pdf format), and distributed around the meeting space, as if twelve 'Stations'. By each Station place five envelopes (or more than one set of five, if numbers require it). The envelopes are unmarked on the outside, but contain one designation each: victim; perpetrator; bystander; rescuer; and resister. People take an envelope, and note their role. They are given some minutes to imagine themselves into the role. They then speak out of this role to the others.

The aim is not to act out the actual narrative (which cannot anyway be done), nor to act out aspects of the back-story, or continuing action. Rather, the purpose is to notice the kind of language which it becomes natural for each person to use in their specific role. Do they plead? Do they offer arguments in mitigation, excuses, evidence of self-delusion...?

While it is not necessary to go around the whole room, it is perhaps best to visit more than one 'Station', to have the chance to play more than one role (and one can refuse to play the same role twice).

At the end, some people may need a deliberate action to 'come out of character'. This can be said by all, in unison, once:

**We are all vulnerable to others' hate.
We may all have been perpetrators or bystanders.
But no one is defined by these roles.
We are not defined by these roles.
We claim the freedom to be ourselves,
and to be rescuer and resister when called upon.
We are ourselves.**

(Prepared by the Revd Patrick Morrow for CCJ: www.ccj.org.uk)

