

Seeing the Unseen

Lent Reflections 2021



Caring for seafarers
around the world



17 February – 3 April 2021

Week 1 – Lent Reflection for the first Sunday of Lent 2021

The Journey

Written by Revd Mark Lawson-Jones, Chaplain South Wales Ports

I sometimes like to imagine what it was like when Jesus told the parables to the gathered crowds all those years ago. Under the hot sun, the people gathered to hear this new prophet and preacher tell them about God, and how a new chapter was starting in human history, it must have been a wonderful experience. I wonder sometimes how they would have reacted when they heard the parable of the Good Samaritan, a traveller is beaten and left half dead on the side of the road. First a priest, then a Levite walk by and ignore him, then a Samaritan stops to help the injured man, even though Samaritans and the injured man would have normally hated each other. After this wonderful generosity the Samaritan continues on his way. Jesus was discussing the law of the day, and how the people were told that their love of God cannot be separated from our love of their neighbour. If they didn't love their neighbour, then they couldn't properly love God. Then a lawyer asks Jesus the question **"And who is my neighbour?"**.

Great thinkers of the Christian faith have sought to interpret this parable and find the true meaning, one that helps us answer this question, St. Augustine interprets the parable as an example of the universal nature of Christian love "every human being is a neighbour to every other human being", this means that we are called to assist others, even though they might follow a different faith, be of a different culture, hold beliefs that we disagree with or even if they are our enemies. For us at The Mission to Seafarers, we want our daily work to be the parable of the Good Shepherd in action.

In the morning as we wake and start the day, we pack bags full of information and gifts to distribute to seafarers on ships. We check the schedules, tide times and weather. We check how many crew members are aboard ships, sometimes learning where the vessel has sailed from and how long the crew has been at sea. Then we go to the ports to climb the gangways to ask if there is anything we can do. Maybe someone wants to talk? Maybe someone is sat in despair with no one to listen? Maybe we will be the only person who will ask 'how are you'? We share in their good and bad news and we assist in any way we can. It makes no difference who they might be, because we are sent to serve, and if we love God, we are told we should show that in our love of others.

As the pandemic has continued to rage throughout the world, we have found once again that the things which keep us awake at night are the same for all people under the sun. We all worry about loved ones, we are all apprehensive about the future now that so much has changed, and we all have anxieties about the things we just can't change, even though we promise ourselves we won't. Those who work for The Mission to Seafarers see through the things which divide us, to concentrate on the things which make us whole: we sit and listen, and we care.

I would have loved to hear Jesus deliver this parable for the first time in response to the lawyer's question, to see the faces of the people as they started to understand more fully God's purpose for them, but I can't go back in time. What I can do however, is to remember one thing: Each morning, when I open the curtains and know that God has blessed me with another day on this earth, I should remember to use it well by being a blessing to others; A kind thought, a considerate word, a generous act, all these actions show that the God of love is alive and well in a world which might sometimes seem bleak and cold.

Make this Lent be a blessing to others with the little things you do, and may God bless you richly.



Please visit www.missiontoseafarers.org/appeals/lent2021 for Weeks 2,3,4, 5 and 6 Reflections. If you would like these sent to you by post, please contact us on **020 7248 5202**.

Legacy Giving

Over the years, legacy gifts have often arrived unexpectedly, delivering very welcome small and large gifts, often at a time of immense need to enable us to fulfil our vital work. Now more than ever, we rely heavily on legacies written often many decades ago. We ask you to consider including the Mission in your Will or adding a simple codicil so your legacy will go on supporting us in years to come.



I have been blessed with a good life without need or want. It is now my duty to be a good steward of what I possess, provide for my loved ones and support those I deem worthy of my help.

For me, the worthiest beneficiaries... are the seafarers who risks their lives everyday so that I may live a comfortable life.

www.missiontoseafarers.org/legacy

In Memoriam

We have all sadly lost many loved ones during these difficult and unprecedented times. Often lives lived to the full were prematurely ended and whilst they have passed on, we seek solace in keeping their memories alive. Several of our Mission family have shared their loved one's life story on our website and make annual contributions on anniversaries and birthdays to help them feel connected.

We offer you the opportunity to record your loved one's story on our website and be part of the Mission to Seafarers' legacy.

www.missiontoseafarers.org/giving-in-memory

Regular Giving via Direct Debit*

In reflecting on your giving, you may wish to consider setting up a direct debit, so the Mission receives a regular gift - monthly or annually from you. This is easy to do and provides the Mission with regular income with which enables us to plan our finances knowing this income is regular.

I give a regular gift of £20 a month to the Mission and it makes me feel more connected and part of their work helping seafarers. I know I will never meet these seafarers, but I know that the Mission's Chaplains are giving support all around the world, and this makes me feel grateful. – A Supporter



Church support*

We invite you to encourage your church to support the Mission's vital work. This support enables us to continue our mission and to raise awareness of all that seafarers do for us. One of our Church Representatives explains:

*Church congregations need to be constantly reminded of the crucial dependance; we all have on seafarers for our daily existence. As we say the Lord's Prayer at every church service: "**Give us our daily bread**", most are unaware of the crucial role seafarers play for the imports and exports of food and essential goods, for our survival, as an island nation. This is especially true for parishes remote from seaports, for whom the crews of ships and ferries are "out of sight and out of mind."*

This is true even in normal times, but during the current pandemic crisis it is now a matter of life and death for all seafarer families throughout the world. At this time when all charities are under huge financial stress, the Mission to Seafarers (MTS) should be extremely high on the list for all church supporters. Every donation, large or small, is put to effective use...

* If you would like these sent to you by post or wish to support us in one or more ways as above please contact us on **020 7248 5202**.

Community representatives and volunteers

Even with the continuing restrictions in place you can still be a community representative for The Mission to Seafarers. We know that you understand the crucial role our seafarers play and, as a keen supporter, you are perfectly placed to inspire others to support those who serve us at sea. You could invite one of our speakers to your virtual Sunday service, arrange a virtual coffee morning, share our videos with your friends on social media or invite people to one of our Mission Live events.

Some of our volunteer ship visitors have continued to work throughout the pandemic:

My name is Barry, I board ships for the Mission to Seafarers. I am a link to the shore for people that have no regular time on shore. I am the supplier of magazines, sweets, telephone top-ups and most importantly, friendship. When you engage with a seafarer about their life away from the ship smiles come thick and fast



Corporate giving

Companies of all sizes support us and see the benefits of showcasing this effort on their websites or in their newsletters and annual reports. One such company, Ardmore Shipping, joined with two others to raise £14,500 over a month with the grand finale of their challenge taking place on International Day of a Seafarer. Their challenge, Sporting for Seafarers, was a united effort, which included not only the employees of their respective companies but their families as well. Ardmore Shipping documented the challenge through a series of videos shown on their social media channels and website.

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Challenge Events

We can all take on a challenge, whether large or small. The important thing is, it is a challenge to you! As so aptly shown by Capt. Tom, who set out to raise £1,000 by walking 100 laps of his garden by his 100th birthday and ended up raising over £32million, even a remarkably modest endeavor, in the beginning, can have a huge impact. Please do check out our events page below for more information on our open entry challenge events. Or design your own challenge by taking part in Global Champions Unite.

www.missiontoseafarers.org/events
www.missiontoseafarers.org/events/global-champions-unite



Running Challenge by Mark Hart

With the situation for many seafarers becoming worse as the pandemic continues, I decided to try and raise some extra funds for the Mission to Seafarers – to aid them in their good works worldwide. I have personally been at sea for 7 months straight and I have seen members of my own crew miss the births of their children, their weddings and 2 crew members unable to fly home to bury their own mothers. Luckily, we are now able to crew change again in Angola (with most nations), however it was pretty rough from March to September with the airport closed.

For the challenge, I initially started trying to raise £1000 to run the equivalent of 4 Marathons in a month (169km or 105miles). By 6th January, the donations surpassed £1000! So, in light of everyone's generosity I decided to up the ante and run 200km (124Miles) in the month and as an extra kicker, if you get me passed £2000 – I will run another half marathon when I eventually get on leave!

Also, same rules as my past two challenges for MtS, for every kilogram I lose during the challenge – I will donate £20 myself. So please cheer me on with your donations, I love reading the messages of support and they keep my legs moving.... Run fat boy run!

Lent provides us with the opportunity to not only reflect on our spiritual wellbeing but also a time to prepare for Easter. During this time, we ask you to also reflect on your support for the Mission as we support seafarers upon whom we all depend.

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Thank you for your support

www.missiontoseafarers.org/donate



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