**The story of the Good Samaritan**

One day, Jesus was out with his disciples, and inviting people to come and listen to him and to ask him questions. One of the people who had come was a lawyer, and he came forward and asked Jesus, ‘Teacher, what do I need to do to be given eternal life?’ Jesus replied by asking the man if he knew what answer to his question he might find in the Old Testament, which was the most important book for them, with lots of guidelines for their lives. The man replied, ‘Oh, it says that I would need to love God with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my strength, and with all my mind; and that I would need to love my neighbour as myself.’ Jesus then said to him, ‘You have given the right answer, you already know what to do: so do that, and you will have eternal life with God.’

But the man wasn’t quite sure yet what Jesus meant, so he asked another question. He said, ‘Teacher, and who is my neighbour?’, because he knew that the Bible wasn’t just talking about the people living next door. Jesus replied by telling him a story. It went like this: ‘One day, a man was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, and on the way, robbers attacked him, and they took all that he had, and beat him, and left him lying there, alone and hurt. By chance, a minister was also coming along that road, and when he saw the injured man, he quickly walked past on the other side of the road. A while later, a temple official came along, and when he got to that place and saw the injured man, he also hurried away. Another while later, a Samaritan man came along the road. Now, the injured man, the minister and the temple official were all Israelites, like Jesus and the man who had asked the question. By custom, Samaritans and Israelites weren’t very friendly to one another: their tribes didn’t like each other and they were suspicious of one another, because they looked different, and ate different kinds of food, and lived in different ways, so usually, Samaritans and Israelites would not even look at one another. But when this Samaritan saw the injured man, he didn’t care that he was an Israelite, he just felt sorry for him. He went to the man, and put bandages on his injuries, and then he put him on his own donkey and took him to an inn not far away. At the inn, he continued to look after the injured man, and, when he had to continue his travels, he paid the innkeeper to look after the man, and even promised to pay him more on his way back, if he looked well after the injured man.’

When he had finished that story, Jesus asked the lawyer, ‘Who do you think was a neighbour to the injured man: the minister, or the temple official, or the Samaritan?’ And the man answered, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go, and live like that man lived.’

What do you think?

* Why didn’t the minister and the temple official stop to help the injured man?
* Why did the Samaritan help the injured man?
* What makes someone ‘our neighbour’?
* Can you think of situations where you might be able to help someone who is in need of a friend?