

Imagine taking . . .

A Woman in labor

A Child with a broken arm

A City Council member to an important meeting

And at the side of the road there was a person struggling with a flat tire

Would you stop?

Helpful to recognize that the priest and the Levite could not stop.

Touching a wounded body would have made them unclean

They could not keep their obligation to the community

But the fullness of God's greater desire is met by the stranger who shows kindness and compassion

I think it is helpful to remember how powerless the followers of Jesus were.

Few in number

Rabble rousers and freaks

Disregarded and cast out from home community

Motivation was faith in a miracle story

The power that these followers had was the power of love

Love expressed through forgiveness

Love expressed through kinship -- kindness

Love expressed through forbearance

Love expressed through humility

Love expressed through faith and hope

By slow and steady persistence, the Jesus believers built new communities based on this kind of love, driven by a belief that Jesus Christ had proved love's power over the powers of the earth.

To him they had done their worst

Yet God raised him above that as proof of the message he had taught

I think it is helpful to remember that the world of the apostles was much worse than our world is today

A time of brutality

A time when violence was the norm

A time when despair and hopelessness were systemic

A time when there was no freedom at all

A time of ethnic and racial division and hatred

Tens of thousands died every year in race riots

And yet, in 250 years the followers of Jesus had become the dominant influence within the Roman Empire

It had provided the answer to all the malaise and brutality of the age

In Christ, it is possible for enemies to reconcile

for compassion to give dignity to humanity

For a community of love to create a new politics

For a desire to please God to lead to healing

Time for the church to get off the donkey and get into the ditch

Time to be the countercultural community of love

Time to stand apart from the world as the Body of Christ