

4<sup>th</sup> February 2022

## Me or them?

**“Life's most persistent and urgent question is,  
'What are you doing for others?'"**

*Martin Luther King, Speech, 1968*

Life is full of questions. Why doesn't glue stick to the inside of a bottle? Why am I stuck behind a slow-moving bus when I'm in a hurry? Why is there always a teaspoon in the bottom of the washing-up bowl? Why do noses run but feet smell? Why is the Lone Ranger "lone" when he has his friend Tonto with him? Why does the Prime Minister not resign? Some questions have no answers. Some might illicit a variety of opinions. Some make my head hurt. There are, however, some crucial questions which deserve careful thought, and action based on the answers we work out.

It's not remembered by most of us, but there's a significant section of Martin Luther King's "I've been to the mountaintop" speech which explores Jesus' "Good Samaritan" parable. Here's the final part:

*The first question that the priest [and] the Levite asked was, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But then the Good Samaritan came by, and he reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?" That's the question before you tonight ... Not, "If I stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to all of the hours that I usually spend in my office every day and every week as a pastor?" The question is not, "If I stop to help these people in need, what will happen to me?" The question is, "If I do not stop to help ... what will happen to them?" That's the question.*

Questions about glue in bottles, slow-moving buses or even the company the Lone Ranger keeps might be interesting or even moderately amusing. But the questions about how we treat other people are both demanding and crucial. If our question is always "What will happen to me?", as might be the case with someone in the public eye at the present time, we will always look for an answer that suits us. But if our question is "What will happen to them?", then we will be at the beginning of a fairer, healthier and more just society – when the needs of others come before our own self-interest.

What's "life's most persistent and urgent question"? *That's* the question worth asking.

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, help me to ask the right questions, and seek to find your answers. Amen*

*An original reflection by @ Tom Gordon Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>*