

2018-11-04 ... 10am Worship Together ... Revd Canon Judy Hunt

Mark 12: 29 – 34

'The Second Great Commandment'

Introduction ...

So well known ... but can be so hard to do!

It's known as the Second Great Commandment:

'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'

That 'difficulty' was the verdict in a small group who met recently and who suggested that a sermon on this passage, a talk on this passage should explore this difficulty.

'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'

Now, then, so that we really take this seriously, really apply it, ground it in our own lives I'd like to put a question to you.

Think of the last once or twice when you know you struggle to love someone ...

What was it about them that made it difficult to love them?

(Revd Judy gave us time to reflect, talk together without naming any person! Then feedback ...)

Possibly there are two main categories:

That we find it difficult to **love our neighbours as ourselves** when:

- a) We find the other person constantly difficult or irritating ...
- b) We know that the other person has done real harm, real damage to someone – which may be to us, ourselves ...

So let's look at the first group or category:

We find the other person constantly difficult or irritating ...

(perhaps think back to earlier examples we reflected on when talking together)

Where might we find help in other Bible passages?

Well – for one – there's **Matthew 7 verses 3 – 5**: this is where Jesus tells us to take the **'log out of our own eye before trying to deal with the speck in our neighbour's eye.'**

In other words – in order to love that person, one thing we can do is to ask God to change us ... to give us the grace not to be annoyed by the person ... but first and foremost to love them.

That's not necessarily easy! But if we co-operate with God's grace – even a conversation with the person concerned might be much better than otherwise! **PTO**

Then what about the second kind of time we find it difficult **to love our neighbour as ourself?**

**When the person concerned has done real harm,
real damage to one or more others ...**

(think back again to earlier examples we reflected on when talking together)

Here, we must know, remember, recognise that **‘to love’ is not the same as ‘to condone’**, to ‘let off the hook.’

When I hear of people who ‘never say a critical word about others’, I don’t necessarily admire them! Jesus had harsh words to say to others at times about wrongdoing. So have a look at the well-known words from **1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 8a** printed in the Pew Sheet:

‘Love IS patient and kind ... but it does NOT rejoice in wrongdoing but in truth.

And it bears, believes, hopes all things and never ends.’

So true Christian love can and will criticise wrongdoing – but it will not withdraw from the wrongdoer.

Love offers the space, the hospitality for change to take place – repentance on the part of the wrongdoer and new life through the Holy Spirit on the part of God.

So let’s ask God for grace and power ourselves to live out this kind of love, to embody God’s love ... both the challenge to wrongdoing and the persistence of offering the space for change. After all, that’s what we want, we need, for ourselves too.