

Trinity 20 The two Great Commandments. St Matthew Ch22 v 34 to 46

“Teacher, which commandment in the Law is the greatest ?” Jesus replied “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it; You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” We note that our Lord gives an order of priority. Love of God first and the love of neighbour depends upon it and flows from it. Some people forget the first one and focus on the second one. But can we? You cannot command people to love. They have to be inspired. Love has to be awakened by love; the deep and enduring love of God which sustains the whole of life revealed most movingly and deeply in our Lord Jesus Christ. As St. John wrote “We love because He first loved us.” To know that we are loved by God, gives us the openness and vision to love our neighbour also.

Jesus said “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind.” “Your heart” means reverence for God shown in worship; to trust Him “Your soul” means to open our lives to His grace. “Your mind” means sharing with God your thoughts, concerns, hopes and fears. To enable us to deepen our awareness of God’s love it is helpful to reflect on St. Paul’s prayer in Ephesians Ch 3 v 1-9. It begins “I kneel in prayer to the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes it’s name, that out of the treasures of His glory He may grant you strength.....that through faith Christ may dwell in your hearts in love “

Jesus also said “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” We might better understand these words if we reversed the clauses. “Love yourself but love your neighbour just as much.” In other words, give your neighbour the same care, support, rights and attention as you give yourself. Such action is part of our common humanity, for we are all made in the image of God

In a world overwhelmed by mass suffering and exploitation of people it is important to stress the worth of each person. Christianity is about relationships; relationships with God; with His creation and with humanity. St. Paul wrote “Have this mind among yourselves which you have in Christ Jesus.” This means, try to have the same attitude which Jesus did. He brought people sympathy, empathy, understanding and encouragement. Of course, there will be times when we fall short of our Lord’s words. But He is not only our teacher, He is also our Lord and Saviour who stands along side us to be our guide, all of which is symbolized in Holy Communion. The Prayer Book post Communion prayer states “Here O Lord we offer and present unto you ourselves, our souls and bodies.” This has been likened to placing on the altar the keys of our lives for God’s blessing and He will give us the inner strength to live our Faith; he will give us the love to love the unlovable and the ability to go on going on.