



## A sermon for the Last Sunday after Trinity

The Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin

25 October 2020

- [Matthew 22:34-46](#)
- [Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18](#)

In our gospel reading, we hear that question asked of Jesus - "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" In other words, there are all these commandments, and it's very easy for us to pick and choose - we like a little bit of pick n' mix - so we want to choose which ones we think is our thing. But this question asked of Jesus - Which of these commandments do you think is the greatest? And if it is the greatest, then what are we going to do about it?

I love the fact that Jesus chooses a commandment, a summary as it were and then says that everything else hangs on it. So there is no escape. We can't get away from it all. And this is it: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the greatest and first commandment. And secondly, love your neighbour as you love yourself." So juxtaposed there is God in the middle.

When I was at Sunday School, this wonderful song that I still remember, "J.O.Y., J.O.Y, surely this must mean, Jesus first, yourself last and others in between." So whatever way we look at it, Jesus is first, God is first - love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength - love him with everything, in other words. Nothing mediocre here about our attention, our focus on God when it comes to worship. Love the Lord your God.

This is the commandment that Jesus wants us to be focused on. So the reality is, as we go about our daily journey with Christ in the community, the first commandment that we should be living, so that others can see and catch a glimpse, is our love and our passion for God - expressed in the way that we live with each other.





The second: “You shall love your neighbour as you love yourself.” Doesn’t matter who your neighbour is, you don’t always get to choose who your neighbour is going to be – but they are your neighbour and you should love your neighbour in the same way that you love yourself.

In the Old Testament book of Leviticus, Moses speaks to the congregation of Israel and says to them “You must be holy.” But what is this holiness that is required of us? Because what we begin to see as we read further in Leviticus Chapter 19, is that the kind of holiness again begins with our love for God and our love for our neighbour. And so: “You shall be holy for I am holy. The Lord your God, I am holy” - and so we need to exhibit and practice and model God’s holiness if we are his children.

And so what I’ve found interesting when you read that Leviticus passage is that this kind of holiness is not a holiness that tells us that we need to pray ten times, or anything like that. This kind of holiness is actually related to how we live with one another. I wonder, when was the last time that you and I gave much thought to the reality that being with one another is holy living? That’s what God is looking for. He is not counting and ticking off how many times we have been to worship, how many times we have had the sacrament. He’s not ticking off how many times we have been to Bible study. He is ticking off how we live with one another. And this is what I find interesting in the passage.

It says that you are to revere your mother and father. Now we know that not all mothers and fathers have lived in a way that endears their children to them. But we need to find a way of loving our parents. I happen to have a special love for all those who are my parents’ generation, because of what they faced, because of what they endured, their resilience and their love for God in spite of the hardships that they went through in life. They had a practice in the Old Testament, where they would say that what they have is actually from God – so they would ignore their parents. This is being challenged. We need to care for the next generation.

When I came to this country, actually, I was shocked to discover that we had establishments for older people – I didn’t know that, I never saw that in Jamaica





growing up. Because in Jamaica the elderly grew up with us – so you’d have the 90-something year old, you’d have the next generation, and you’d have the little tiny grandchildren all running around, all in the same community together, living with each other. So that was a huge learning curve for me. And the kind of learning curve that enabled me - when my father was ill in Jamaica and my children were very young - to say to my husband, “I’m going home to assist with my father, but if I can’t find anyone to look after him, I may have to stay behind to look after him,” – not because he was the greatest dad, because he probably wasn’t. But then again, what models did he have about fatherhood? So the reality is, our parents, the elderly, the generation before us, we are to care for them and love them.

And then something else that I found in that passage – “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges.” I went to a church last week and they had apple trees – not on the church land, but next door - and there were apples by the edges and I was so tempted, “Oh, those apples, they’re going to waste!”

Don’t gather everything in, allow the alien, allow the refugees, allow the stranger, allow the orphan who has nothing to be able to come and get some food. “You shall not strip your vineyard bare. Don’t gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and the alien.” This God of ours, this God of ours who is holy - his holiness is set around how we reach out and embrace those who have nothing.

“Be holy as I am holy.”

“You shall not render an unjust judgement. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great” – in other words, “Be just in your dealings with everyone.” “You shall not go around slandering others, you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbour. I am the Lord.” Please, do read the passage. God’s holiness is focused on how we live with one another.





And so that commandment of Jesus, that greatest commandment, is focused on how we love our neighbour. You see? I believe it is in First John where it says, “How can you say you love God, whom you’ve never seen, and yet you do not love your brothers and sisters whom you can see?” In Leviticus 19, it says, “When an alien resides with you in your land, do not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as a citizen among you – you shall love the alien as you love yourself.” Why? “Because you were once alien in the Land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

Instead of alien, we can use the word refugee or asylum seekers, those who are homeless, those who are seeking to come to our shore. When they are here, don’t treat them as if they are some alien from another planet. Why? Because they ought to be treated as God has treated us. So that’s the challenge, my brothers and sisters, this Sunday, as we focus on those words – love the Lord your God with your whole being, and love your neighbour as yourself – “your neighbour” also includes the asylum seekers, the refugees, those who are fleeing terror, the people who have no money, who have nothing, the orphans, the widows, those who are most vulnerable.

The greatest commandment calls on us to live in a way that shows the world around us that our changed lives are actually impacting on others and changing others’ lives. So when someone asks you, “What difference has it made to know Jesus?” you and I with great confidence will be able to say, “Because I know Jesus, I’ve been able to respond to my neighbour with compassion and with love, I’ve been able to respond to those who are homeless, I have been able to respond to those who are seeking refuge. That is the challenge, my brothers and sisters, so as we go out and hear those words, “What is the greatest commandment?” the greatest commandment is love.

May God bless you as you seek to live that commandment day by day. Amen.

KEEP WELL → KEEP PRAYING → KEEP CONNECTED

