

Administration of Communion - update

From Pentecost Sunday onwards, all will be invited to come to the altar rail for communion.

We will be offering the common cup, as required by the Church of England in its updated guidance issued in May. However, we would like to stress that use of the common cup is optional and we invite all to receive communion in a way that you feel comfortable with. We will explain the practicalities of the new arrangements in the service on Sunday.

Pentecost, Sunday 5 June – All-age worship at 10 am at Holy Trinity will be followed by a **Platinum Jubilee picnic**. Please bring your own picnic and drinks. Weather permitting, we can sit outside in the vicarage grounds so please feel free to bring picnic blanket and garden chairs. And if you can ‘do a turn’, please come along and add to the entertainment!

Here are several other summer events and dates for your diary.

Sunday 3rd July – We welcome our new Curate-in-Charge Matt Wood, who will preside on his first Sunday at the All-age communion which will be led by Bishop Sophie. Celebratory refreshments will be served after the service!

Bishop’s garden party – Saturday 18th June 2-5 pm at Bishopscroft, Snaithing Lane S10 3LG with the theme of **Creation Care, Eco Church and Upcycling**. There is no entrance fee, but there will be lots of opportunities to purchase crafts, cakes, refreshments, plants etc. with all money raised going to Christian Aid and Refurnish Ltd - a charity committed to saving resources and enriching lives. There will also be face painting, children's nature trail, live music and much more!

Summer Concert - Thursday 7th July at 7.30 at St. John’s Church. Come along and enjoy the music of the choirs of Holy Trinity St. Johns and friends. Tickets £7 including refreshments.

Sunday 10th July at 4pm at Holy Trinity – Choral Evensong sung by the Steel City Choristers.

The **Mothers Union** are going to be organising a Cream Tea for A.F.I.A.(Away from it All) on **Wednesday 20th July at 2.30pm**.

There will be tickets for sale at £5 to give us an idea of numbers for catering purposes. Further details to follow.

With warm wishes,

Angie

Sermon, 15 May 22

1st reading:

Genesis 22.1-18

2nd reading:

Acts 11.1-18

Gospel reading:

John 13.31-35

After I gave my first sermon in January, my wife Kate told me to make my sermon less like an academic lecture that I give in my university classroom week on week, and to include something more personal within it—some anecdote or experience. My last sermon was on The Transfiguration, and it *was* very personal, in that I spoke of how all of us need to allow Christ to transform us so we can minister and care for others, and to allow his glory to shine through our lives.

But today, I'm going to duly begin with something personal as I speak about all three readings we've heard, readings about *love*.

In the **Genesis** reading, we see Abraham's love for his son, and God's love for Abraham. God tells Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, a sacrificial act of something so precious it's hard to comprehend. As many of you will be aware, my wife Kate is currently pregnant, and we're eagerly awaiting the birth of our daughter in October. I don't think I previously understood the gravity of the sacrifice Abraham was being asked to make by offering up his son; and I'm sure I still don't. But having had the wonderful news of our child, and having recently seen her 12-week scan, perhaps I understand a little more now of what Abraham was being asked to give up. God stopped Abraham from sacrificing his son; but, as we see in the **Gospel** reading, Jesus made the supreme sacrifice for the world out of love.

In the **Acts** reading, we have the comfort of Peter spelling out unambiguously that Jew and Gentile alike are loved by Christ and are given access to Christ's kingdom. Peter is told by means of a vision that the old Jews-only covenant has passed away, and that the new covenant has opened the kingdom of heaven to us all. Finally, in our **Gospel** reading, Jesus commands us to love each other, telling the disciples that by loving one another, the world will realize that we are Jesus' followers. And if we love one another, the world will see Christians who don't only *profess* our faith, but who also *live* it.

Let's explore what Christ meant, then, when he told us, his followers, to love one another. Jesus said: 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

William Barclay speaks of four different ways Christ loved his apostles and loves us, thereby identifying four different ways in which we should love others.

i) The first kind of love is *selfless*. Christ loves us *selflessly*. Rather than thinking of Himself, Christ thinks of us. Jesus served and gave himself for those he loved, and of course also for those—the vast majority—who cared nothing for Him, who rejected and reviled Him. Rather than thinking about whether or not we deserved his selfless act of love in making the supreme sacrifice of the cross, Jesus gave his life for all.

This reminds me of the hymn we will sing later today by Graham Kendrick, called The Servant King. Here are some of the words:

From Heaven you came,
Not to be served, but to serve,
And give Your life that we might live.
This is our God, The Servant King;
He calls us now to follow Him...

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load He chose to bear,
His heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not My will, but Yours,' He said.

So let us learn how to serve,
And in our lives enthrone Him,
Each other's needs to prefer—
For it is Christ we're serving.

So the first way in which Christ loves us, and the way in which we are commanded to love others, Jew and Gentile, Christian and non-Christian alike, is *selflessly*.

ii) the second way Christ loves us is *sacrificially*. William Barclay speaks here of how our love for others may cause us inconvenience, even pain and suffering. Putting others first means we put ourselves last; striving for other people's happiness may entail neglecting our own comforts. Those we reach out to in love and service may reject and wound us, just as many rejected Christ. But just as Jesus came to serve, not to be served, may we do the same for others.

iii) The third way in which Christ loves us and loved His disciples was *empathetically*. Barclay reminds us that Christ knew His disciples very well, as they had lived cheek-by-jowl together for three years during His ministry. It's

also worth remembering that at the time of Christ there was far less space for privacy compared to today. Nowadays we can ensure our public and private images are very different, managing and controlling what we say and what we do in public, while being very different in private. But there was no such hiding place from Christ for his disciples, as they lived, ate, and travelled together. And during this time, Jesus questioned and tested them intensively. So Christ knew his disciples in a way we could describe as *intimately*; he knew their weaknesses, their failings. And of course there were plenty of weaknesses and failings. Jesus was with his disciples during their worst moments, like those moments each of us has that we are not proud of, which we wish we could forget. Indeed, Peter warned Jesus of his inner frailties right from the start, at the time of his calling: 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' So Jesus knew his disciples' failings—but *loved them anyway*. As Barclay says, although we sometimes say that love is blind, the lover not seeing the faults of those dear to them, Christ's love isn't blind. He knows us and our shortcomings better than we know them ourselves—but still he loves us. 'The heart of Jesus is big enough to love us as we are.'

iv) The fourth and final way in which Christ is commanding us to love one another is *forgivingly*. The disciples deserted Jesus at His greatest hour of need. Peter, the leader of the disciples, betrayed and denied Jesus—denied Him not once, but three times. But thankfully for Peter and for us, Christ is full of grace and forgives us, again and again and again. Remember how on a different occasion, Peter asked how often he should forgive his brother who had sinned against him:

‘ “As many as seven times?”

Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but seventy times seven.” ’ (Matthew 18.22)

In his commentary here, Barclay is harsh, severe even, when describing the disciples whom Jesus loved forgivingly. Barclay says:

‘His disciples never really understood Him. They were blind and insensitive, slow to learn, and lacking in understanding. In the end they were craven cowards.’

However, he then adds:

‘But Jesus held nothing against them; there was no failure which He could not forgive. We are poor creatures, and we tend to hurt most of all those we love best...’

And so true love forgives, even seventy times seven, and bears no grudge.

So, in short, true love is to love everyone, Christian and non-Christian alike, as Jesus loves us: selflessly, sacrificially, empathetically, and forgivingly. He came to be our Servant-King; and we must imitate him, and serve others. This is the meaning of His new commandment.

Let us close by saying three prayers which ask Christ to help us love Him and to love others as we live out our calling as Christians.

Let us pray.

First, a prayer by St. Anselm, asking for love to dwell within us:

O Lord, who has loved us and saved us, come and dwell in our hearts. Give us love, the sweetest of all gifts, which knows no enemy. Implant in our hearts pure love, born of Your love for us, that we may love others as You love us. So help and bless us now and forever more.

Amen.

Second, a collect for love, by Brooke Foss Westcott:

Almighty and most merciful Father, Who hast given us
A new commandment that we should love one another,
Give us also grace that we may fulfil it.
Make us gentle, courteous, and forbearing.
Direct our lives, so that we may look each to the good of others in word and deed.

Amen.

And lastly, a prayer by Wiliam Barclay, asking God for faith, hope, and love:

O God, our Father, grant us
The love which is always ready to forgive;
The love which is always eager to help;
The love which is always happier to give than to get.
And so grant that living in faith, in hope, and in love, we may live like Jesus.

Amen.