

**A 2024 LENT STUDY
BY BISHOP IAN COUTTS**

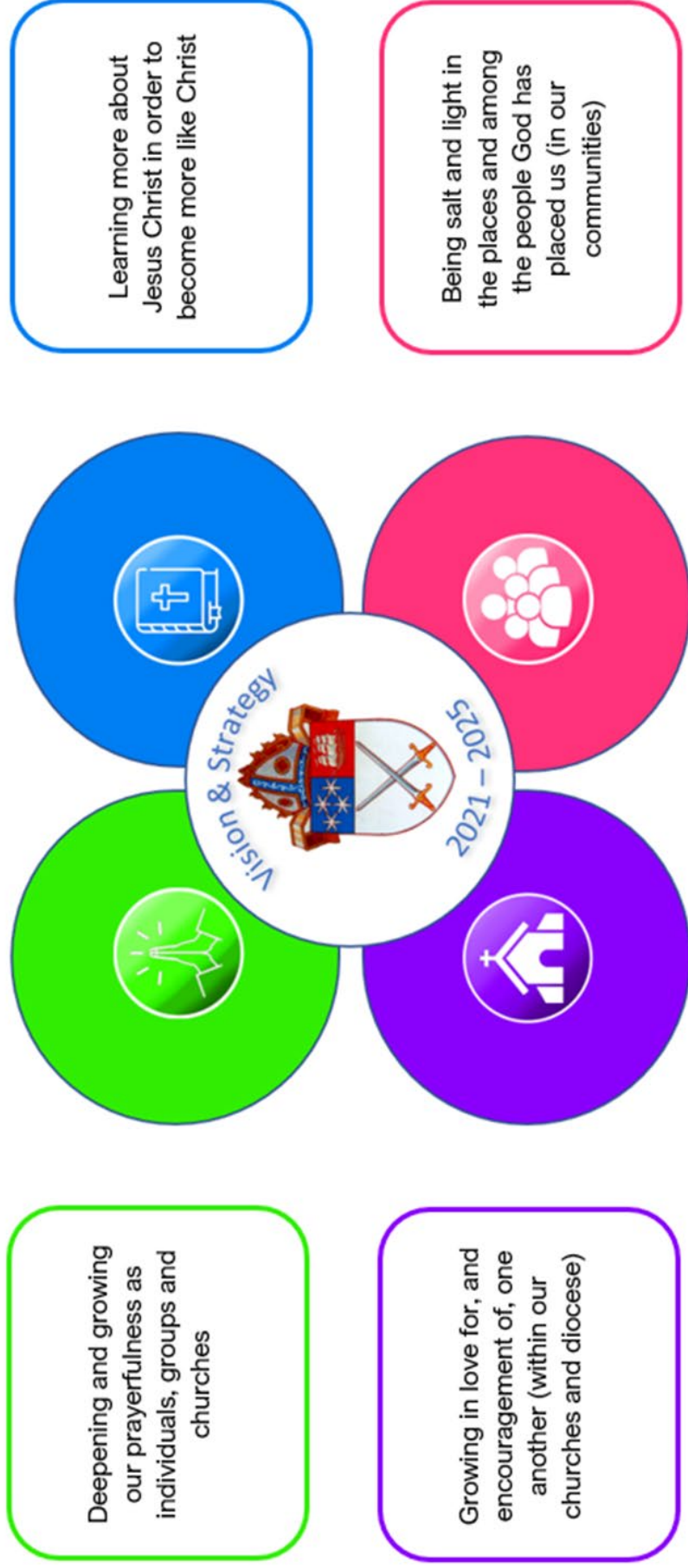


**Love One
Another.**

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Diocese of Bunbury: Vision and Strategic Plan for 2021-2025

Our Vision: Being God's Church for God's world by fulfilling the two great Commandments: to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.



Luke 10.27: “[Jesus] answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’”

1 John 4.19: “We love because he first loved us.”

Love One Another

Introduction



This is a 6-week course for Lent 2024 designed for groups or individuals to reflect on our current diocesan strategy of *'Growing in Love and Encouragement for One Another.'*

The theme of love is arguably one of the most significant in the entire Bible, and a defining part of what it means to be a Christian. The content looks at the biblical basis for why we are called, and indeed commanded, to love one another, including the nature of the triune God we worship, and what it means to be created as human beings in this image. The course looks at the many New Testament passages that refer to love between the members of the church, including Christians being addressed as 'beloved'. The New Testament goes further than this for it also defines what love is, and the significance of love towards others as both an attitude and one that leads to loving action. Each week will link to the next so it is hoped that groups and individuals will be able to follow the whole Lent course, or catch up individually. There are questions for you to consider and ponder, whether you are working through this on your own, or within a group.

Programme

Week 1 - What has love got to do with it? (14-20 Feb)

Week 2 - Understanding love – starting with God. (21-27 Feb)

Week 3 - Commanded to love? The emphasis of the Old and New Testaments
(28 Feb – 5 March)

Week 4 - Becoming a new community
(6 – 12 March)

Week 5 - Encouraging one another (13 – 19 March)

Week 6 - Love in action (20 – 26 March)

How to use this study

You will need a Bible (or a Bible app)

Thinking and talking about love can understandably raise all kinds of memories and emotions, sometimes quite unexpectedly and even unconsciously. Please therefore be kind and considerate to yourself (as well as to others, if in group). You may need some time and space to consider these memories and emotions, and you may wish to share them with someone you trust and/or offer them to God in prayer. Jesus promised that God hears and answers our prayers (Matthew 7.7-11).



Extra study material is included at the end of each study under the heading 'For Further Reflection'. This section is entirely optional.

Week 1 – “What has love got to do with it?” (14-20 February)

Although the English language has been described as having more choices of words than any other language, at least two words appear to be exceptions. These are: ‘snow’ and ‘love’. In the case of snow, Icelandic language has 46 words for snow, Inuit 40-70 (depending on whether you live in Greenland or Alaska), and apparently there are 175-180 words for snow in Saami (spoken by those who live in Northern Scandinavia or Russia). When it comes to love, C.S. Lewis wrote a book on the 4 Greek words for ‘love’,¹ but in English we mainly use just one word, *love*, which covers a wide range of meanings.

1. Do you speak other languages? What words are used for ‘love’ in those languages?
2. Are there other words we use that convey some of the meaning of love, for example: *compassion, comfort*?
3. Tina Turner’s hit song: ‘What has love got to do with it’ describes love as ‘a second-hand emotion’ or a sweet ‘old-fashioned notion’. How would you describe love, or rate its importance?
4. When we talk about ‘love’ in a Christian context, what do you think is being described?

Read 1 John 4:7-21

This is a profound passage and it is worth spending some time reflecting on it, whether you are on your own or in a group. The following questions may assist you:

5. Who are the brothers or sisters John is referring to, do you think?
6. How does John define love?
7. What are the effects of this kind of love on people and their relationships?

How prominent is the theme of love in the Church?

The passage from 1 John is only one of many such passages in the Bible. However, it is not a theme that is always studied in great depth in the church (See ‘For Further Reflection’ below).

8. Have you heard/read podcasts, sermons or Christian books on the subject of love? What did you learn from them?
9. Why do you think the theme of love is so prominent in the Bible?

Pray

Break into pairs. Take it in turns to pray the words of Paul’s prayer for each other.

¹ Agape: unconditional, selfless, and divine love - Eros: passionate, romantic, and sexual love - Philia: affectionate, friendly, and brotherly love - Storge: natural, familial, and protective love

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church:

'For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.'

(Ephesians 3.14-21)

For Further Reflection

As we shall see, love is a big theme in the Bible – both in the Old and New Testaments - but, perhaps surprisingly, it has not always been such a prominent theme in Western theology and Christian teaching. Two of the major books written on the subject of love, for example, – C.S. Lewis' *The Four Loves* and Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros* were published over 60 and 90 years ago, respectively. Werner Jeanrond claimed in 2010 that there had been a shortage of new theological investigation about love over the previous 40 years. He thought this was a strange omission when:

'Love is at the centre of Christian faith. God loves this universe in which human love as a gift of God is able to transform lives. God's love and human love are of primary importance for theological reflection.'

This theme of love, however, is definitely present in our liturgy and in hymns and songs. For instance, you will often hear as the introduction to the Confession:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one; you shall **love** the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' Jesus said: 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall **love** your neighbour as yourself.'

And at the end of each Holy Communion service, you will also hear these words:

'Go in peace to **love** and serve the Lord'.

When we think about hymns and songs, Charles Wesley's hymn: *Love Divine, all loves excelling* is just one of many on this subject. These are the words of the first verse:

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heav'n to earth come down,
fix in us Thy humble dwelling;
all Thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love Thou art;
visit us with Thy salvation;
enter every trembling heart.

Can you think of other hymns or songs on the theme of love?

When I mentioned writing this Lent course and the absence of much recent literature on the subject, Canon Karen Cave remembered she had a book called *Divine Love*, written in 1985 by Selwyn Hughes. Selwyn was a Welsh charismatic minister who devoted himself to writing, including the daily Bible study notes: *Every Day with Jesus*. Peter and Jeannie Cornish, in our Cathedral congregation, used to work with him in the UK and knew him well.

Selwyn noticed the difference between the significance of the theme of love in the Bible in comparison even with some other important biblical themes, such as faith. He quotes Professor Henry Drummond whose sermon on 1 Corinthians 13 was entitled: 'The Greatest Thing in the World'. As Professor Drummond observed, Paul lists three great qualities in 1 Corinthians 13 – faith, hope and love, but did not “hesitate from declaring love to be the champion among them”. Selwyn also noted that John was writing his epistles at a time when he was contending with Gnosticism (a movement claiming secret personal knowledge for its adherents) and consequently uses the word 'knowledge' 36 times, but love is mentioned even more, 43 times. Selwyn also quotes Peter who, like Paul and John, points to the underpinning significance of love:

'... you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (2 Peter 1:5-7)

You will remember that our 2nd diocesan Strategy was *Learning more about Jesus Christ in order to become more like Christ*. In this passage above, Peter claims love is at the root of faith and all these other qualities in comprehending more about Jesus Christ.

Week 2 - Understanding love – starting with God (21-27 Feb)

Last week we looked at how we only seem to have one word - ‘love’ - to describe a multitude of meanings in English. We also began to introduce the significance of the theme of love in the Bible and noted that Christian literature and teaching does not always seem to reflect this emphasis to the same degree.

This week the reason we are concentrating on God is because the Bible makes the surprising claim that God *is* Love. (1 John 4.8). In other words, if we are trying to define love, or find out more about love, then we need to understand more about God. God may not seem the first place to start when thinking about love but the Bible makes the radical claim that in order to understand and even define what love is really all about, then God is the right place to begin.

1. When you think of God, what kind of thoughts do you have? How much does *love* feature in these thoughts?

What is God’s love like?

The Bible makes claims that God’s love for us precedes our response to God and is sacrificial. One of the most well-known verses in the Bible also tells us about the extent of God’s love:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send him into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world may be saved through him.” (John 3.16-17)

What about God and love in the Old Testament?

Sometimes it is claimed the God of the Old Testament is different in nature to the God described in the New Testament. Is this really the case?

2. What do you learn about God’s love from the Old Testament texts on the next page? You can use the space below to write notes if you wish. If in a group you might want to divvy up these references between you as individuals or in pairs.

Deuteronomy 7:7-8

Isaiah 66:13

1 Kings 8:23-24

Jeremiah 31:3

Nehemiah 9:16-18

Hosea 14:4

Isaiah 49:15

Joel 2:13

Isaiah 63:7-9

Zephaniah 3:17

Bible Verses about God's Love in the Old Testament (as referenced above)

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 - *It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you—for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸ It was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

1 Kings 8:23-24 - *'O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, ²⁴ the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand.'*

Nehemiah 9:16-17 - *'But they and our ancestors acted presumptuously and stiffened their necks and did not obey your commandments; ¹⁷ they refused to obey, and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them; but they stiffened their necks and determined to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and you did not forsake them.'*

Isaiah 49:15 - *Can a woman forget her nursing-child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.*

Isaiah 63:7-9 - *I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised according to all the LORD has done for us—yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. ⁸ He said, "Surely they are my people, children who will be true to me"; and so he became their Savior. ⁹ In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.*

Isaiah 66:13 - *As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.*

Jeremiah 31:3 - *the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.*

Hosea 14:4 - *I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.*

Joel 2:13 - *Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.*

Zephaniah 3:17 - *The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.*

Jesus tells us about the extent of God's love

Another extraordinary claim of the Bible is that if we wish to know more about what God is like, and therefore how love is defined by God, then we need only look at Jesus Christ. Jesus himself is reported as saying these words: *'He who has seen me has seen the Father'* (John 14.49).²

3. What do you know about Jesus that informs us about God's love? Try to think of all that you already know.
4. What additional information about God's love through Jesus can you find in these verses:

Matthew 9.35-36 - *Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

Matthew 15.32 - *Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.'*

Luke 7.11-13 - *Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. ¹²As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. ¹³When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, 'Do not weep.'¹⁴ Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, 'Young man, I say to you, rise!*

Luke 24:34 - *Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing.*

Continued overleaf

² See also John 14.6-11

A whole other level: The Trinity and love

Every time we recite the Creed, whether it is the Nicene Creed or the Apostles Creed, or very occasionally, the Athanasian Creed, we pledge our belief in the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. How is this relevant to the theme of love, you may ask? The answer is that the relationship of love between the distinct ‘persons’ of the Trinity is so strong we properly think of God as ‘one’ or completely united.

Read John 17: 20-24

5. What do you learn about love in the context of the trinity from this passage?
6. What does this passage say about the relevance of that love to us?

Jesus’ prayer in John 17, especially verses 20-24, speaks to a depth of relationship God wishes to have with us, as well as us with one another. Indeed, this is a profound part of understanding that God is love. As we shall see next week, this triune God is seeking a relationship of love with everyone.

Before next week: If you can, please read John’s Gospel chapters 13-15

For Further Study

In the Bible it is God who defines love

John’s epistle put it like this:

‘Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ...

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.’ (1 John 4.7 & 11)

The New Testament writers clearly saw that God’s sacrificial love was very carefully based and prefigured in the Old Testament.

For example:

- Luke 24.13-27, esp. v27
- Genesis 22.1-18 is the story of Abraham being asked to sacrifice his son Isaac but in this Old Testament story it is God who provides an alternate, foreshadowing the sacrifice of God’s own Son.
- Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 are among many other Old Testament passages that contain powerful echoes of the accounts of Jesus Christ’s atoning death.

The Trinity

Orthodox and Coptic theologians, whose Eastern Christian tradition has generally been stronger on the Trinity than the Western Christian tradition, talk about the creation of the

universe and the world, as well as Jesus' incarnation and the redemption on the cross, as all stemming from this pivotal, astonishing and overflowing love relationship within the Godhead. We are very familiar with the words from Genesis about human beings being created in God's own image but in the West we have usually associated this with each individual human person. This is not an entirely accurate portrayal of the Genesis text. Instead, Gen 1.26 says: "let us make humankind in our image".

It does not take much experience to realise the quality of our relationships with one another, and specifically a relationship of love with one another, is vitally important for us as human beings, whether as individuals, or as groups of people. The biblical claim is that this is because we are made collectively in the image of God, and therefore how we act towards one another and love one another will make a profound difference to us personally and collectively. This assertion that we human beings are collectively made in the image of God is the more remarkable because God was not permitted to be imaged in any other way.

Hymn: God is love

God is love, let heav'n adore him;
God is love, let earth rejoice
Let creation sing before him,
And exult him with one voice.

God, who laid the earth's foundation,
He who spread the heavens above,
And who breathes through all creation
God is love, eternal love.

God is love, and gently enfolding
All the world in one embrace,
With unfailing grasp is holding
Every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking
Under sorrow's iron rod,
Then they find that selfsame aching
Deep within the heart of God.

God is love, and, though with blindness
Sin afflicts our human hearts,
God's eternal lovingkindness
Holding, guiding, grace imparts.
Sin and death and hell shall never
O'er us final triumph gain;
God is love, so love for ever
O'er the universe must reign.

Week 3 - Commanded to love? (28 Feb- 5 March)

The Emphasis of the Old and New Testaments

Old Testament Emphasis

There is a very significant and consistent Old Testament theme, which explicitly refers to our human response to God's love by obeying God's commandments.

1. What do you learn about God's command to love him from the verses below? If you are in a small group context, share the verses out and feed back to each other.

Deuteronomy 6.5-9 - *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. ⁷Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, ⁹and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

Deuteronomy 10.12-13 - *So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to keep the commandments of the LORD your God^l and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being.*

Deuteronomy 11.13 - *If you will only heed his every commandment^[b] that I am commanding you today—loving the LORD your God, and serving him with all your heart and with all your soul— ¹⁴then he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil;*

Joshua 23.11 – *“... it is the LORD your God who fights for you, as he promised you. ¹¹Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God.”*

Psalms 5.11 - *But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, so that those who love your name may exult in you.*

Psalms 31.23 - *Love the LORD, all you his saints. The LORD preserves the faithful, but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily.*

Psalms 91.14-16 - *Those who love me, I will deliver; I will protect those who know my name¹⁵ When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honour them.¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy them and show them my salvation.*

Proverbs 8.17 - *I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.*

New Testament Perspective

The passages in John's gospel from John 13 to John 17, which you may have had the chance to read after last week, are significant for understanding the importance of loving one another as Christians. Indeed, Jesus' *commandment* to his disciples to love one another and, in particular, his recorded prayer in chapter 17 that his future followers would do the same, are precisely why '*growing in love for one another*' forms part of this 3rd diocesan Strategy. John carefully reiterates this commandment in these 4 chapters:

- '*If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love.*' John 15.10
- '*I give you a new commandment that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*' John 13.34
- '*This is my commandment that you love on another as I have loved you.*' John 15:12

A "commandment" is defined as a divine rule, or a 'rule to be observed as strictly as one of the Ten Commandments.' Loving one another is not therefore an optional or discretionary extra for us as Christians. We are *commanded* by Jesus Christ to do this as followers of Jesus.

At first sight, being *commanded to love one another* appears incongruous. How can we be ordered to do something such as *loving*, which we may instinctively associate with voluntariness? It is worth, therefore, seeing how the Bible addresses this potential concern.

2. What reasons are given in the following verses for obeying the command to love God and love one another?
3. What continuity do you see with the Old Testament? What's new or different?

- John 14:15 - *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*
- John 15:9 - *As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.*
- John 15:11 - *I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.*
- John 15:12-17 - '*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants^[a] any longer, because the servant^[b] does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.*

A scholar called Jordan Wessling commented of John's gospel, "**it seems that Jesus is describing a particular quality of love, a love that obeys commands.**" This is a different type of obedience, not one being demanded by someone who has power over another, but something being offered voluntarily and willingly to God and to other people, out of love. John's epistle comments: *'For the love of God is this, that we obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.'* (1 John 5 v 3)

Author Selwyn Hughes pondered the conundrum that it is not always easy for us to fulfill the command to love God. He reflected: **'The command to love does not mean we have to reach deep down within ourselves to create feelings of love for God, but rather we should focus on how much God loves us and let God's love love us into loving.'**

Selwyn quotes another author, John Powell, from a book *Why am I afraid to love?* Powell says: **'Before anyone can really give their heart, soul and mind to the task of loving God, he or she must first know how much God has loved them, how God has thought about them from all eternity and desired to share God's life, joy and love with them.'**

4. How far do you agree with the statements made above by Jordan Wessling, Selwyn Hughes and John Powell?
5. Have you experienced something of how much God loves you?

Pray

We finish this week with a prayer of E.B Pusey (19th C, with slightly updated language):

'O God, fountain of love, pour your love into our hearts, that we may love those whom you love with the love you have given us, and think and speak of them tenderly, meekly, lovingly; and so loving our brothers and sisters for your sake, may grow in your love, and dwelling in your love, may dwell in you, for Jesus Christ's sake.'

For Further Reflection

When we think of commandments we often think of the 10 Commandments, which form the basis of Judaeo-Christian law to this day. Mark 12.30-31 is the story of a lawyer who asked Jesus, out of all the commandments, which is the most important? According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, there were no less than 3600 commandments in Israel at that time. Jesus reply was to name not one but two profound commandments: 'You must love the Lord your God with all your whole heart and with all your whole soul and with all your whole mind, and with your whole strength ... You must love your neighbour as yourself.'

Sometimes we can associate commandments with orders and law and legalism and not with grace, or love, or voluntary freewill. St Paul, in particular, thought about these issues very deeply because of his own background as a Pharisee and then encountering the free grace of God. This helped him when he came to address the potential clash between the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Galatia and in Rome. This was his considered response to the Roman Christians:

'owe no-one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.' (Romans 13.8)

You might like to look up 1 John 2.1-11 which explicitly links God's commandments with our knowledge and love of God and our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Contrast this with Proverbs 10.12 and also try 1 John 3.23-24.

If, as human beings, we were intended to image the Triune God then it also follows that anything which breaks this quality of relationship, or prevents it from developing, is likely to be damaging to us as individuals and as communities. It is why when we find ourselves in these situations they can be so stressful, including within our families and our churches. It is also why in the *Book of Common Prayer* people were reminded on a previous Sunday to make their peace with one another before taking Holy Communion on the next occasion. Here is the wording:

'And if ye shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God, but also against your neighbours; then ye shall reconcile yourselves to them; being ready to make restitution and satisfaction, to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other; and being likewise ready to forgive others that have offended you, as you would have forgiveness of your offences at God's hand.' (*Book of Common Prayer* p 147)

Christopher Marshall is a New Zealand theologian who has been working on restorative justice in the New Zealand criminal system. In his book *Compassionate Justice*, he examined the parable of the Prodigal Son. Marshall refers to the Prodigal son's offending as 'relational rupture'. The prodigal son does not just break the law at some technical level, says Marshall, he does something far worse: he wrecks bedrock relationships. His offending manifests a profound disrespect for the rights and needs of others. Marshall argues this constitutes the harmful essence of all crime. God's command for us to love God and one another is thus designed to create, develop, and where necessary, heal relationships.

Week 4 – Becoming a new community (6- 12 March)

What is the aim of loving one another? We have already considered a number of aims, such as responding to God's love for us, obeying Jesus' commandments to love one another, and being the recipients of joy. This week's theme is about also becoming a new community that demonstrates what God is like and reflects the image of the trinity.

1. What do you already know about the early church as a community? Take a little while to brainstorm all you know.

Jesus' Teaching

We have previously looked at some of Jesus's ministry with his disciples in John's gospel. Other significant instances of Jesus forming them into a community can be found among the gospel accounts.

2. What do we learn about Jesus' expectations for his new community of followers from the verse below?

Matthew 5.19 – *“Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 12.49-50 - . . . *pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers!’⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.*

Matthew 18.1-5 *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’² He called a child, whom he put among them,³ and said, ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵ Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.’*

Matthew 18:21 - *Then Peter came and said to him, ‘Lord, if another member of the church¹¹ sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’²² Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.’*

Mark 10.43-45 - *‘. . . whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’*

John 13.3-14-16 - *‘. . .if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.¹⁶ Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master. . .*

The Early Church

It is believed one of the reasons the early church grew so rapidly was in part because it attracted such a wide spectrum of society, from all walks of life. Because these groups of people loved one another it made them inherently appealing to others. Indeed one of the true meanings of 'church' is to be found in the degree of love demonstrated in these groups of people.

The writers of the epistles use familial and endearing terms when addressing their recipients: such as 'beloved', 'brothers and sisters' or 'dear friends', showing the depth and nature of their love for one another. The epistles also contain explicit instructions about loving one another and how to do this.

3. Do you regard the members of your church community or organisation as 'beloved', 'brothers and sisters' or 'dear friends'? If not, which terms would you use?

4. What do we learn from the verses below about the apostle's expectations for these new communities of faith?

Romans 15.1-7 - *'We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. ... May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Jesus Christ, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.'*

Ephesians 4.32 - *'So then, putting away all falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin.; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouth, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.'*

Philippians 2:2 - *'... make my joy complete by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others.'*

1 Peter 1:22 - *... love one another deeply from the heart.*

1 Peter 2.17 - *'Honour everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honour the emperor.'*

1 Peter 3.8 - *'Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called – that you might inherit a blessing.'*

5. Look at your answers to Q2 and Q4. Which of these aspects of community life do you see happening in your own church community or organisation?

6. What challenges you? In which areas could we grow more in our love for others in your church community or organisation?

7. What could you do that as an individual ?

For Further Reflection

The New Testament provides a great deal of information about this new community, from the descriptions in the book of Acts to the letters or epistles written to the various churches or groups. There was even a special word for this community: *koinonia*, which is sometimes translated as ‘fellowship’. In Greek, *koinonia* denotes a close relationship (like marriage), an association, partnership, sharing or a common bond that unites people. As you may know, there was also a special word for the love that bound them together – *agape* (*pronounced ag-a-pay*).

The accounts of the early church in Acts speak of a very special community that worshipped God together and loved and supported one another and welcomed outsiders. Perhaps the best examples are found in Acts 2.43-47 and 4.32-35.

Perhaps the best known example of instructions to a community of Christians about loving one another can be found in 1 Corinthians 13. Although often used to describe a quality of love at wedding ceremonies the intended context was about love within the church. St. Paul goes to the extraordinary lengths by constructing this chapter in Greek poetic rhythmic form to underscore how the fractious and factious Corinthian Christian community should behave with one another, and why love is so important. Compared with all the things they were at odds with one another, or concerned, about, Paul points out their greatest concern should be their love and care for one another. You may find it worthwhile to look up and read this chapter afresh. Sometimes it is thought-provoking to insert your name, or the name of your church community, in place of the word ‘love’ in verses 4-6.

If you would like to look up some more examples: Philippians 2.2, 4.2-3, Colossians 1.4, 1 Thessalonians 5.26, 2 Thessalonians 1.3, 1 John 2.7-10

A New Testament scholar, E.G.Selwyn, examining 1 Peter, found some similar patterns of words in the text across different writers of the epistles. Among them were words that referred to taking off and putting on, which in Greek are *deponentes* and *induentes*. These words were followed by lists of behaviour that people were supposed to remove or put on. Selwyn speculated that the writers had borrowed from a common source of baptismal or catechetical teaching that prepared adult candidates for Easter baptisms and admission to the early church. At the baptism itself candidates would exchange their old clothes for new white gowns and Selwyn thought this would be a reminder of all they need to remove and all they needed to put in order to become members of the Church, as they died and rose again with Christ in baptism. Of note, what they were reminded to get rid of was everything that could damage or destroy the church’s *koinonia* and *agapeic love* and everything they were to put on would enable *koinonia* and *agape* to grow and flourish. The passage from Ephesians 4, which

you read above, has some elements of this possible formula, as does 1 Peter 5.5: ‘... and all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another.’ (See Colossians 3.5-16 or Ephesians 4.25). If Selwyn is right, then this formed an important part of the preparation to become a baptised member of the early church, and the writers who quoted from this material were also reminding them of this earlier baptismal teaching.

The gospels were written later than many of the epistles and it is possible that the writers were also thinking of particular current issues in the Church when they were putting together these accounts. One potential example of this is Matthew chp.18. It contains some important instructions about how to deal with one another when things go wrong. We use this teaching in our diocese as the basis for trying to resolve difficulties and disputes. The parable Jesus relates about the unforgiving servant (verses 23-35) is very telling for it suggests that whatever we may feel someone owes us may pale into insignificance with the amount God has forgiven each of us.

There is a story about St John who as a very old and frail man would be carried into church in Patmos. As he passed each of the rows, or however people were seated, he would utter the words “love one another”. 1 Peter 2.9-10 describes how the addressees – a mixed grouping of people, many of whom might not have known each other very well because they were likely exiles – had been formed into an entirely new group together (see 1 Peter 2.9-10). 2nd century Tertullian famously quoted a pagan opponent who noted: ‘See how much these Christians love each other.’ The 39 Articles, which form part of the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia, are closely based on scripture. Article 28 reminds us that Holy Communion is intended to be a ‘Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ’s death’ and ‘a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to the other.’

Week 5 - Encouraging One Another (13 – 19 March)

Our diocesan 3rd Strategy is not only *Growing in love for one another* but also *Growing in encouragement of one another*. This week we are concentrating on this second part: growing in encouragement of one another. ‘Encourage’ is defined in the dictionary as: ‘to talk or behave in a way that gives someone confidence to do something, to fill with courage or strength of purpose’.

Not far from us in Bunbury is the “Big Swamp” with a 2km track around it used regularly for a Park Run. This week there were messages chalked on the track at different places: “Only 250 metres to go, Cathy”, “you’ve got this”, “awesome”, “well run”. I imagine that Cathy and all the other runners would have been heartened and encouraged by these carefully pre-prepared messages.

1. How important is it to be encouraged?
2. How do other people encourage you? What do they do that make you feel encouraged?
3. How do you encourage others?

There are many possible answers to these questions above. Sometimes what is encouraging for one person may not be quite as encouraging for another. Can you think of any examples from your own experience, or from someone else you know about?

The Example of the Trinity

In Week 2 we began to consider the Trinity as a community of love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is worthwhile seeing how the members of the Trinity interact with one another in the Bible. Each member has specific responsibilities, but they work closely together and they also acknowledge and glorify one another rather than themselves.

4. In what practical ways do you see members of the trinity encouraging one another in the verses below?

Mark 1.35 - *In the morning, while it was still very dark, he [Jesus] got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.*

Luke 3.21-22 - *Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened,²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved,’^[a] with you I am well pleased*

Luke 4.1 - *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness*

Luke 22:42-43- *‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.’⁴³ Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength.*

Continued overleaf

John 16.13-15 – *‘When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me [Jesus], because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.’*

5. What can you learn from these examples about how you can encourage others?

Building Each Other Up

The word for ‘building up’ in Greek is the same word you would use for constructing a house. It is also sometimes translated as ‘edification’. This word is used by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians:

‘Let no evil talk come out of your mouth, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.’ (Eph 4.29) ³

6. What do you think it means to build a person up? How can our words do that?

Encouraging others has observable knock-on or ripple effects. For example, if we feel encouraged, supported or loved, we are much more likely to do the same for others. Thus, one act of kindness or encouragement for another person can lead to more acts of kindness and encouragement by that person, and so on. Furthermore, as each individual member does their part to build up the others in the body of Christ, the entire body grows up and becomes mature and healthy.⁴

Putting it into practice

An Archdeacon in Gippsland, who was once one of my distance students, has for many years written a letter of encouragement each day to someone he knew or knew about. He believed this was something God was calling him to do. As we have seen there are many ways we can encourage others.

7. How can we encourage each other more in our churches and organisations?

Pray

Who can *you* encourage this week and how? Ask the Lord to bring to mind a person or people from your church or organisation whom you can encourage this week. Ask the Lord to show you how to do that. Write down what you think you hear and then act on it. Perhaps you could make this a regular practice?

³ See also 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Romans 14:19, Romans 15:2

⁴ Romans 12:3-8

For Further Reflection

Another form of encouragement is when we feel supported by others who care about us and our situation, particularly when we are shouldering a burden or a task of one kind or another. St. Paul speaks of this in Galatians: 'Help to carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will obey the law of Christ.'

There is a youth group game which illustrates this mutually supportive effect. You ask a group of young people to face the back of each other around a circle, standing quite close to one another. At this point you ask them to all sit down at the same time. If conducted well, they are all able to be support one another seated all the way around the circle, at least for a short time!

When you answered the questions at the beginning about what encourages us? Did being a member of a team get mentioned? Anyone who has been a member of a footy or hockey team will know, at their best, the joy and encouragement that comes from working together as a team, utilising different skills and abilities as well as just being there for one another. Jesus deliberately formed a team of 12 disciples. He also sent out 70 disciples in teams of two (Matthew 10:1-4, Luke 10:1-12) rather than on their own. Teamwork is about sharing responsibilities, supporting one another and achieving things together (see Luke 10:17-20). This kind of teamwork is exciting, dynamic and can lead to novel and astonishing results, all of which are incredibly encouraging in turn. Theologians have a technical term for how the Trinity acts like a team. The term is '*perichoresis*' which means to dance around or dance together (*choresis* is the same root word as in *choreography*). In short, the Trinity is the archetype and epitome of true teamwork. Being in the image of God is being in this teamwork image.

It is worth unpacking the encouragement that comes through teamwork a little more because there are several other things happening here. One of these is being *affirmed* for our particular role and contribution to the team. Paul uses the analogy of the body in Romans 12:3-8 to illustrate that everyone has an important but interdependent role in a church community. He developed this same illustration to make an identical point to the Corinthian Christians in 1 Corinthians 12:4-31. It may be worth having a look at both these passages. We do not always think of our contribution as being special or distinctive and we also do not always know we are valued. Thus affirming people for who they are and for what they mean to us, or to others, is vitally important in encouraging others. It helps underpin their specialness and their sense of self and self-worth.

Because we do not always realise our own contribution is special or unique, we may also labour under the misapprehension that others are equally and identically capable as we are. The truth is instead people may be amazed and appreciative of the ease and proficiency with which we can tackle matters they would view as far too challenging. Recently someone I know was thanked profusely by another person in their church for a particular task they were undertaking. It was something they found easy to do and were good at but the other person was so relieved they no longer had to fulfill this task, which for them was onerous. Some four decades ago, I was on a Mission team for the first time with a dear man, and later friend, called Alyn Haskey. He had a disability, due to cerebral palsy, and was in a wheelchair. Our assignment that evening was to go along to a rowdy youth club in a tough part of Nottingham and share the gospel. I mistakenly thought I ought to accompany Alyn because he might need

help, or even protection! How wrong I was – he was a gifted story-teller and there was utter silence and respect from these outwardly tough young people when Alyn spoke.

A further significant encouraging aspect of teamwork is *acceptance* and *belonging*. We have been spruiking a book for our 3rd *Strategy of Growing in love for and encouraging one another*. It is: *Belong: Loving your Church by Reflecting Christ to one another* by Barnabas Piper. He argues our task is to create churches where everybody feels at home. He describes them as ‘places of depth and honesty, of real fellowship and community where people truly experience the love of Jesus.’ He says such churches are places where people feel they genuinely belong. As we saw from the accounts in Acts in Week 2, these church communities are also places where God’s Holy Spirit can and will send further people.

Week 6 - Love in Action (20 – 26 March)

This is the last week of the Lent course. As the title suggests, we are looking at love and encouragement *in action*. The emphasis is on putting what we have been studying and thinking about during this Lent course into practice.

1. What do you learn from the verses below? What practical steps do they call for?

James 1:22-25 - *But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.²⁶*

James 2:14-17 - *What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill’, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.*

1 John 3:16-18 - *We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?¹⁸ Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.*

The Example of the Early Church

The early church demonstrated their willingness to put their faith into practice, sharing meals together and redistributing their possessions and resources for the benefit of those who had need.

2. What very practical acts of love do you see in the verses below?

Acts 2:44-47 - *All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

Acts 4:32-37 - *Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. ³³With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. ³⁵They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. ³⁶There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means ‘son of encouragement’). ³⁷He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.*

3. How much of what you read about the early church in these verses do you see reflected in our own church or organisation?
4. Where might more practical acts of love be needed?
5. What can we/you do about that?

Becoming mature in Christ

According to theologian and teacher David Heywood, the goal, or endpoint to which all Christians are to aspire it to conform to the image of Jesus⁵. In other words, to become like Christ.

6. What does Paul say in the verses below about how we reach maturity?

Ephesians 4:11-16 - *The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.*

7. How mature in Christ is our church or organisation?
8. What might we need to do to become more mature in Christ?

Closing Comments

How do we become the community of saints God is calling us to be? This is partly down to us and our individual responsibility. Paul writes to the Galatians to point out they can use their freedom to harm others or 'through love become slaves to one another'. He adds, for emphasis: 'For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself"'

But it is also partly down to the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's gifts of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are extraordinary antidotes to all the behaviours that can fracture and damage our fellowship. This same Holy Spirit, Paul notes, can assist us to gently help those who mess up¹. It is also the Holy Spirit who transforms us 'from one degree of glory to another', as we become more conformed to the glory and likeness of Jesus Christ.⁶

9. What one new thing will you begin or have you begun to practice to deepen your love for others in your church or organisation?

Pray

Ask for the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to love one another as Christ has loved us.

⁵ Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 15:49

⁶ 2 Cor. 3.17-18

For Further Reflection

If you remember as far back as Advent, many of the Lectionary readings from Matthew's gospel underscored that what matters to God is whether we live what we say we believe. Perhaps the most powerful of these accounts is in Matthew 25:31-46. This story mirrors Jesus' words earlier in Matthew 7:24-27. You might like to look these two passages up. Although about a rather different issue, Jesus' story in Matthew 21:28-32 also bears on this.

These are far from being the only passages in the Bible. The Old Testament has many references to God being interested in what the people of Israel actually did (for example: Jeremiah 7:1-12). Their practice was even more important than their nominal worship of God (see also Micah 7:6-8). In the New Testament the authors of James and 1 John reiterate this theme.

Neither James nor John mince their words about the dangers of lip-service. Both of them suggest the true test of our Christian belief and love is whether they lead to action. John states: 'Little children (another term of endearment) let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.' James says where no action is evident, self-deceit is likely to be in play and that person's 'religious' pretensions are 'worthless'. James lists a number of other areas for attention under this general heading – eg James 2:1-13, James 3:1-12, 13-18 and James 4:11-12

Martin Luther was famously not fond of the book of James. He called it a 'strawy' book, meaning it did not have much substance. This was partly because it contains no reference to soteriology – God's plan of salvation, unlike most other New Testament books. It was also because Luther railed against any sense that by our works or deeds, rather than faith in Jesus Christ, could we be put right with God. I am not certain that Luther realised James was making a different point, namely that the true test of the faith we say we believe is whether we are prepared to do things differently as a result. You may want to refer back to James 2:14-26. James concludes this section by stating starkly; 'faith without works is dead.'

As well as the accounts about the early church in Acts 2:43 – 47 and 4:32-37, Acts chapter 6 shows them taking practical steps to address the concerns of the Gentile widows. The Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 is another example of the early Church finding practical ways to resolve differences that threatened to divide the Jewish and Gentile Christians.

There is an old ditty that goes like this:

'To dwell above with the saints we love, that will be glory. But to dwell below with the saints we know, well that is a different story.'

This is no new issue. On more than one occasion Jesus had to intervene with his disciples who were potentially at odds, or vying with one another. Matthew 18, for example, was written in part because of disagreements and indeed disagreeable people in the early church. Remember Peter's question about forgiveness in Matthew 18:21-22 and Jesus' story in reply (Matt. 18:23-35)? The same chapter contains practical advice to deal with persistent offenders, and the epistles also give evidence of conflicts that required resolution. Indeed, it is probably no exaggeration to say that we might not have as big a New Testament as we do have were it not for some of these conflicts the writers needed to address. By the same token,

as we have been looking at in this course, the same writers took enormous care and trouble to describe how Christians should think and behave towards one another very much in keeping with Jesus' remarkable prayer in John 17. The following brief section from Ephesians is just one of many such passages we have looked at:

'And do not grieve the Holy Spirit with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore, be imitators of Christ, as beloved children, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.' (Ephesians 4:30 – 5:2)

Back in the day, the neighbouring Rector, in adjoining parishes just south of London, was the Revd David Heywood. He since became a lecturer and writer at Cuddesdon Theological College. In one of his books, about preaching, David observed that in the New Testament the transformation of the Church to become progressively like Jesus takes centre stage. He added: 'The conformity to the image of Jesus is the *telos* – the goal or endpoint to which all Christians are to aspire. Reaching this goal is described as *teleiosis* which denotes "maturity".'

Heywood suggests that the Beatitudes and the 'fruit of the Spirit' are both examples of this maturity and represent a radically different lifestyle. Paul is among other New Testament writers who urge the believers to 'lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.'

When you think about the Beatitudes and the fruits of the Spirit, they are manifestly Christ-like. Moreover, they are all about the attitudes and priorities that underpin and motivate Christ-like action.

This maturity and lifestyle in Christ is not just for individual Christians but is also addressed to whole churches. David Heywood again:

'... All the New Testament letters go into detail about Christian behaviour. Within the church Christians are to display humility, gentleness, compassion and mutual love. Their roles as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves were to be governed by an ethic of mutual submission. They are to learn and put into practice the 'ministry' of Christ himself, characterised by love, humility and self-sacrifice.'

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) wrote a prayer along these lines:

'Help me to spread your fragrance everywhere I go – let me preach you without preaching, not by words but by my example – by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what I do, the evident fullness of the love my heart bears to you.'