

Sermon – The Sixth Sunday in Easter 17 May 2020

by the Revd Irene Joss

Our Gospel reading this morning started with Jesus saying these words. "If you love me, obey my commandments" Question is, what commandments did He mean?

When Jesus was asked which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses he replied "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind. This is the first and greatest command and the second is like it you shall love your neighbour as yourself."

Jesus wasn't talking about wishy washy, heart-racing, leg wobbling love. This love He meant as Peter reminded us last week is a self-offering, self-denying, sacrificial love, the love that caused Him to come into a world of UNLOVING BROKEN relationships....ours with the Father and ours with one another. If we have accepted the gift of eternal life offered by Jesus on the Cross our relationship with the Father is restored. But what about our relationship with one another? Think about this just for a moment...is there someone; a family member, work colleague, church member that I just cannot love? That I feel bitter towards. Perhaps they hurt me in some way. Perhaps they just irritate me and I'm unable to love them... I'm sure each of us has a story? Two incidents in my own life may give your conscience a nudge though yours may be very different. I have only one sister. We used to be very close but over the years have drifted apart. We live very different lives...and I was bitter towards them about their treatment towards my mom. In fact we had a major fall out some years ago when I spoke up about it which caused the rift to widen even more. We spoke when it was absolutely necessary. They were due to emigrate end March. I knew my bitterness was against what God wanted for me and prayed numerous times that somehow my feelings could change. Then the lockdown came...they were now housebound and we started to communicate again speaking a little more than before. ...and I praise God somehow my feelings have changed... I apologised she apologised, and our relationship has improved by leaps and bounds. I still feel sad about their treatment to my mom but I realise now they didn't see it like I did...and mom loved them even though they were too busy for her. Another eg. there is one person who I come in contact with regularly who I found extremely irritating. I prayed long and hard for God to help me to love her.. and guess what one day the scales fell off my eyes and I realise she irritated me because she's a lot like me! Whatever our own personal broken relationships are, God can and will intervene if we trust and ask Him, sometimes in mysterious ways. Let us ask ourselves. How willing am I to seek restoration love... always remembering as the Christian I need to make the first move.

Sometimes it's easier to say there are no problems in my life Thank You! But as God's children, filled with His Spirit, we can be sure He will prompt us when there is some love missing in our lives.

In the world real strength is to do things my way and if there are any relationship problems, well, the world says leave them behind get rid of them of those people you don't need them in your life.

But as God's obedient children this is what it means to be a Christian as a Christ follower to obey what Jesus said to love no matter what.