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Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : October 25th, 2020
“Last Sunday after Trinity”

LAST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY – 25 OCTOBER 2020

A former colleague of mine told me a story the other day. A couple approached him and said “Vicar, people are saying that they want some deep teaching”. He told me he did sigh as the common phrase “people are saying” isn’t always an accurate one. Anyway, he asked them what they meant by “deep teaching”. “Well, you know – deep teaching”. “Well” he said to them “Jesus told us to ‘love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbour as yourself’. When you’ve all got that cracked, come back to me and we’ll talk some more.” Brilliant.

In today’s Gospel, we hear Jesus giving a summary of the whole of the Bible in a couple of sentences. He is saying that everything in all the law and the prophets was an exploring and working out of this summary – “Love God; love neighbour”. So, be encourage – because this morning we have read the whole Bible – or to be more precise, we have read the subject matter of the whole Bible, because of course everything in the Bible is to do with what we have just read – people learning to love God with their whole being, and their neighbours as themselves. In a nutshell the Bible is the story of their learning, their mistakes and failures, and of God’s great love helping make the impossible possible. Though as one writer has put it, “it’s well worth reading the full-length version”.

Jesus gives unassailable answers to the lawyer who is testing him. “Love God; love neighbour”. But then Jesus goes a bit further in the passage for he has a question of

his own: “God’s anointed one is exalted on high. How can that one be the son of a human, even a human as illustrious as King David?” The answer stares the Pharisees in the face: for the answer is the person, Jesus of Nazareth, who is in front of them. The messenger is the message – born of David and born of God.

Some of us love teasing out the meaning behind the Bible passages and others of us simply accept our faith without necessarily feeling the need to question deeply. I heard of one eminent theologian who was an acclaimed author - I forget his name – but who, despite his wisdom and expertise, clung onto the words first taught to him as a young Christian: “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so”. Like the extremely experienced sea captain who had tattooed on his left hand the word ‘Port’ and on his right hand the word ‘Starboard’ – just in case!

So perhaps, in spite of all the many complex discussions that we can enjoy as Christians, everything that we can study and learn and delve into as we explore the deep teachings of our faith, this is enough for now: “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so”. As Paul puts it, God is gentle with us as a nurse caring for children – and so we too should be gentle with ourselves as we work out our place as Christians in today’s world, with the command of Jesus ringing in our ears: “Love God; love neighbour”.

*Merciful God, teach us to be faithful in change and uncertainty, that trusting in your word and obeying your will, we may enter the unfailing joy of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*