

A Sermon preached by Lyn Jenkins on the twenty second Sunday after Trinity

1 John 3: 17

How 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?

Those words bring to mind Sydney Carter's hymn – 'If I needed a neighbour were you there?'

Those words also can make me feel uncomfortable – or even guilty.
How much of the world's goods do I keep for myself and only give when I have seen to my own needs first?
It's a question we could all ask.
Of course we must have some common sense – we wouldn't really be helping were we to give so much away that we in turn became the needy one – for then others would have to give to us.
The whole thing could become quite complicated.
But I'm sure we could do better if we really thought about it.

GOD IS LOVE – that is the Gospel message.
But that love of God is meant to be portrayed in the lives of us Christians.
There is not much point in preaching about love if we do not practise love in our daily lives.
It can be all too easy to say 'we love everyone'. But words can be cheap.
We must **show** that love --- if we claim the love of Christ dwells in our hearts, then it must be visible for all to see.

St John also says: *Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.*

So what sort of people should we be?
Well, to begin with, everything we do and everything we say must be done and said in love. --- not because it may be the right thing, not because we want others to think highly of us, not because we want something back in return ---- but purely out of love.

GOD IS LOVE – even more so --- GOD IS **PERFECT** LOVE.

The good News for all people is that Jesus proclaimed that GOD LOVES EACH ONE OF US.

So even though we fall short of always showing love, God will not stop loving us.

He accepts us as we are ---- but Jesus hopes and expects his followers to at least try to show love. As Christians we do our best to be people of love so that the Love of Christ will not just dwell within us but will flow from us and spread like ripples on a pond eventually, probably not in our life-time, but eventually covering the whole world.

As St John in his letter says:-

How 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?

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

Yes, this text could easily make us feel guilty.

It is also a text appropriate for the economic situation today.

As the people of the West grow richer, those in the Third World grow poorer – and why? – because the rich exploit the poor. We want cheap food from poor countries and as a result often take their food so they lose out twice – instead of growing crops for them selves they grow crops to sell to the West, but get little return for them.

Let's hope Fair trade is doing something towards rectifying this.

But it is not only The rich West versus the Third World ; even in our own country the gap between the haves and have nots seems to be widening – and why? Again because of greed – people are never satisfied and want more and more.

So what do we do to help?

If we love God and keep his commandments, then we will be willing to have less so others can have more; we will be willing to share resources.

Because of the economic situation, charities are suffering through lack of funds. We cannot give what we have not got, but we must not make the present situation an excuse not to help those in need.

Giving is part of our Xn duty.

How much we give, and to whom we give, is a matter between the individual's conscience and God.

But giving of our money is only a small part of giving. Sometimes it can be the easy way out.

Giving, in the eyes of God, involves service.

It is the giving of ourselves which is paramount.
And the giving of ourselves in love.

Fine words will never take the place of fine deeds; and no amount of talk of Xn love will take the place of a kindly action to someone in need, involving some self-sacrifice, for in that action the principle of the Cross is operative again.

The Lord Jesus is Love incarnate.

It was through love that Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus showed and still shows us what love really is – he lived a life of love.

And we, his followers, are encouraged to do the same.

Love is wanting the very best for others.

Love is not thinking of oneself but thinking of others – putting others first, being willing to go without so others can have more – giving one's all to the benefit of others. – living a life of service to mankind and to God.

And love means helping those who need help.

That help may not necessarily be in giving money. After all, many wealthy people may need help, but they certainly don't need money.

People may need our time, our talents.

I believe we underestimate the importance of time.

Half the population, it seems, have too much – time on their hands – do not know how to spend it profitably, while the other half fill up their time so that there is none left over.

But time is one of the most important commodities we can give to people.

Many children go off the rails these days because parents don't have the time to talk to them – quality time, is what we call it.

Many people can be lonely and sad because nobody bothers to visit them.

Many problems can be lessened by a listening ear.

Just being with a sick person can be time well spent.

Those sort of things can be Xn love in action.

Giving up our time in order to help others.

Time is a precious commodity and not something to be wasted.

Yet again, it does not do to be so busy trying to do good works that we have no time for ourselves.

We all need space to charge our batteries.

And we certainly all need to spend time with our Lord.

What we need to learn is how to prioritise our time – not an easy task, but will become easier if first we give time to the Lord.

Be still in his presence and listen to what he wants to say.

It's not much use giving quality time to others if we don't give quality time to God.

In the kingdom of Jesus the test of greatness is not 'What service can I extract? But What service can I give?

The basic trouble with the human situation is that so many people wish to do as **little** as possible and to get as **much** as possible. It is only when they are filled with the desire to put into life more than they take out, that life for themselves and for others will be happy and prosperous.

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

As Xns we are bidden to show our love for our Lord, by offering our lives to him to serve him and our fellow beings.

The world seems to have got itself into a financial mess ---- as a result of greed & irresponsibility --- people making fat profits at the expense of others, and not caring about the consequences.

The Bible over and over again warns us about worldly wealth.

What we need to seek is treasure in heaven.

And as long as people put worldly wealth above heavenly treasure, the economic problems are not likely to be solved.

As long as people keep making money at the expense of others, true happiness will never be found.

How 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?

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