

**Sunday 25 October 2020**

**Last Sunday After Trinity**



*'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'*

### **Introduction**

The overwhelming message of Leviticus is the holiness of God: *'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy'*. Sacrifices, priests and the sacred Day of Atonement opened the way for the Israelites to come to God and worship him with their lives. Thus in Leviticus we read of purity laws, rules for daily living, worldliness and vows. These instructions involve our holy walk with God and God is honoured by our lives as we relate to others by the grace of God.

### **First Reading: Leviticus 19.1-2, 15-18**

The passage consists of excerpts from the Holiness Code (ch 17-26). The Code was composed during the development of Israel's religious rituals and social conventions. The chapter contains most of the ten commandments but the climax of the chapter comes in the words about loving one's neighbour as oneself.

*The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:*

*Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.*

*You shall not render an unjust judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbour. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbour: I am the Lord.*

*You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.*

## **Gospel: Matthew 22.1-14**

More questions to Jesus, from an expert in the law, intended to test and entrap him. Jesus responded by stating the two great commandments. Matthew gives relatively short shrift to this statement in contrast to Luke's parable of the Good Samaritan.

*When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' He said to him, '“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'*

*Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: 'What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?' They said to him, 'The son of David.' He said to them, 'How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet" '?" If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?' No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.'*

## **Reflection**

What Jesus says about loving God and loving one another, only makes sense when set within Matthew's larger gospel picture, of Jesus dying for the sins of the world and rising again with the message of new life. That is when these commandments begin to come into their own: when they are seen not as orders to be obeyed in our own strength, but as invitations and promises to a new way of life in which, bit by bit, hatred and pride can be left behind and love can become a reality.

*(Tom Wright, Bishop and Theologian)*

## **Prayer**

Blessed Lord,  
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:  
help us so to hear them,  
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them  
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,  
we may embrace and for ever hold fast  
the hope of everlasting life,  
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen