

## Sermon Rev T Matsveru 14.5.2023

Today we find ourselves looking at John 14 set before Jesus goes to the cross. This is a passage that I would like to believe was later well understood by the disciples afterwards. Sometimes there are pieces of information that you hear, and they will make some sense and you move on and then later something will happen which will draw you back and suddenly you get the full meaning, (Eureka moment) a deeper understanding of the depth and this pieces you would have missed. Its like the fog clears and aha, you can see the trees clearly.

Jesus has emphasised on belief in John 14: 1 – 14 telling them to believe in God and in him and not to let their hearts be troubled and now we get to the next verses 15 – 21 where the emphasis is love. Jesus says, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. Its one thing to say the word love and talk about love but love my brothers and sisters comes with actions. Love as Jesus talks about it, comes with a duty, not just any duty but the duty to obey: if you love me, Keep My Commandments.

Jesus is saying to us as part of being my disciples, your discipleship is not complete if there is no obedience and not just any obedience but obedience to my commands. Only then when we show that obedience can there be a sign of love. When we explore the Gospel of John, we find that Jesus has given his disciples these commandments:

- So, if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. John 13: 14 – 15
- I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' John 13: 34 – 35
- 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. John 14: 1

There are some commandments some rules in life that when given, they are easy to follow because it's like a tick box. Its when as a child you are told to clean your room, do the dishes, and do your homework and often there is a reward: then you can watch TV. So you go: tick, tick, tick, and you put your feet up with a bowl of popcorn and you are watching that favourite show. As adults we do

the same. No one tells us what treat to have but you tell yourself that I will do A, B and C and I will enjoy a glass of wine watching the sunset.

But how do you measure that you have loved enough? Enough for one hour, enough for a day, enough for a year or a lifetime?

Jesus then tells them from verse 16, 'I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.' He knew what he was telling them, and he knew they would need an advocate who can strengthen, who can help them keep these commands, who will tell them the truth, who will be like an antenna. Its like when you have a car especially these new cars, they are sensitive. If you are getting out of the lane when you are not indicating to change lanes, it will ring an alarm; if you get close to an object, off the alarm goes and it keeps you safe from accidents and your car from getting scratches if you listen and action when the alarm goes.

The problem with the world we live in is, we have refused to listen, to action, to follow the commandments willingly. We are now living in a world where many take pride in obstructing the sharing of love, putting sanctions and rules that inhibit others from caring, loving, providing, being brotherly.

We live in a world where we are constantly being reminded year in year out to love and care and we leave our church doors having nodded when David shared on love, when Nigel shared on inclusion, when Margaret talks about looking out on others and the list goes on and we nod our heads and we smile and maybe even write it down or make a mental note to go and do better or be the change we want to see in the world. Do we? Have we?

We live in a world where procrastination has taken over our lives. I will do it tomorrow but tomorrow never comes. We do spring cleaning and take out the clothes and things we do not need with the intention of taking them to those who need them, and it isn't until next winter or when we need to go on holiday, and we need the boot to pack our camping gear or put bags that we finally go and drop them off.

Having good intentions is well and good. Its the first step. But we must follow through. Some of us know our weaknesses, our limitations and Jesus is saying the Spirit, God's Spirit will be with you. My brothers and sisters if we let the Spirit of God live in us, the Spirit of God can help us to do increasingly and abundantly, beyond our imagination. He says, this is the Spirit of truth whom the world

cannot receive but we know him because he abides with us and will be in us as Christ followers and children of God.

Paul in our reading makes reference that we are God's offspring. If we as God children are showing love in action, how come we still have the marginalised living amongst us? How come we have the poor getting poorer while the rich are getting richer? How come resources like medicines are available for some and not all in our world? Yes, in Matthew 26:11 Jesus indeed when he was being anointed at Bethany said the poor you will always have. However, that was not so we can shrug our shoulders in apathy now because it is an old saying. Yes, we might have been born in a world where there are already poor people and broken systems but that does not mean we shrug our shoulders and say that's the status quo. Jesus was not reinventing the wheel.

There is more to that. Jesus, I believe, was speaking to an audience who knew the catchphrases in line with the Jewish Law Deuteronomy 15:7-11 to give generously and not be hard-hearted. However, he was saying things will be different after me. He was saying learn from me and follow what I teach you and ask of you as my disciples because when do you do what I tell you, it's a game changer, things will become different, you will move mountains, you will perform miracles, the advocate will be in you and with you, you will be unstoppable and I in heaven will know without question, without doubt that you love me.

As disciples (disciplined learner of Christ) we should not be reminded to love others, to lend a helping hand. That should be in our nature to do that. Whenever we encounter Jesus in his ministry he is drawn to and is moving about showing love and spreading love.

Today marks the beginning of Christian Aid week which we will delve deeper into at our evening service at 6:30pm here in church with a video from Malawi. We are being encouraged to love in action, to think of our brothers and sisters in Malawi and bring together resources to share with them so that life can become manageable. As we are twinned as a diocese with Malawi, there is also a container that the diocese is organising to send full of various things (details in the newsletter) as a gesture of love and care and all are welcome to contribute to the Christian Aid appeal and to the container being sent by the diocese.

My brothers and sisters, it is good to be good, to be kind, to be compassionate, to forgive, to be gentle. Sometimes, it is our refusal to soften our hearts that

hinder us from doing some great acts of kindness. 1 Peter 3 then challenges us this morning asking firstly, now, who will harm you if you are eager to do good? We are being encouraged not to be intimidated by those who chose to call that which is good, evil, and even if they should do so, we are blessed. We are being encouraged to sanctify Christ in our hearts and not fear. Ships sink because of the water that goes in. we are being encouraged not to let the negative words from other people to get to us such that we give up because truth be told what people say can sometimes get to us when we are doing good things that we stop.

I want to thank you for the good that you do, commend you for your love and generosity. Here at All Saints, there is a lot that you do and have done in the past. I want to also encourage you to keep on doing these good acts of kindness and not stop because you have done a lot already. Your good hearts and your generous heart go a long way in making sure that a woman in Malawi can provide for her children, send them to school, equip them such that they too can learn a trade, become a nurse, and contribute to building up a community.

Though you might not see them, there is someone out there who is grateful and always remembers that someone out there cared enough to change how their future would have looked. Let us be open to what the Advocate, God's Spirit can do through us and show love in action as Jesus said, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments'.