

## **Sermon 31 October 2021 – Family Sunday DG Sunday**

Good morning again everyone and a very warm welcome to our Sunday school today. Thank you for doing the readings and prayers for us today. It really is wonderful when you participate in our services. I really appreciate it.

Today I need your help. You see I have a card and gift for some special young friends. And I'm wondering if I should give the card to my friends instead of the gift. Do you think it is a good idea to give the card and keep the gift? No...

Well then, how about I add a box. That way my friends will get the card and the box. Oh, you don't think that is a good idea either. Ok, I'll add the wrapping paper? Now I am really being generous...don't you think?

Well, what do you suggest I do? Give the whole thing! You want me to give my friends the card, the wrapping paper, the box, AND the gift?

Yes, I agree. When you give a gift, you want to give all of it to your friend. Isn't that so...?

In our Gospel story today, Jesus talks about this when he answers a question about "Which commandment is the first of all?" (12:28). In other words which rule is the most important one to follow. Do you remember what Jesus said? That's right...Jesus says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' (12:30-31). What Jesus is saying is that there are two important rules, and both are all about Love. Love God and Love your neighbour as you love yourself.

Jesus is teaching us how we should love. When we offer our love to God, we do so with all that we are. And when we love our neighbour – brothers, sisters, cousins, friends, strangers, enemies – we need to love them as we love ourselves.

Now what does that mean? Let us just take a moment and think about how you love yourself... Do you take care of yourself? Are you kind to yourself? Do you take care of your body and choose your friends wisely? Or do you put yourself down and get involved in harmful and destructive relationships and behaviour? You see when you

don't take care of yourself you will not be able to be kind and generous and loving towards others. We can only build other people up – encourage them, love them – when we feel good about ourselves.

When we feel good about ourselves, we look after ourselves – we take of our bodies and watch what we say and do. When we do this for ourselves it is easier to do the same for others.

In the same way you wouldn't think of giving a friend just the wrapping that holds a gift and keeping the rest for yourself. Would you? No... of course not. This is the same with how we love God – with all of who we are.

And part of giving all of ourselves to God – the whole gift – means that we offer our time, talents and money for God's work to be done through the church. In a little while your mummies and daddies are going to offer themselves in love and service to this church community by placing their dedication cards in the collection plate. They are making a commitment – a promise – to do things for God in this place. And I want to encourage you also to offer yourselves too. Now you may not have money to offer – because you don't work – but you can offer your time and talents by continuing to participate in the services - doing the readings and prayers like you did today. You can also offer to come to church regularly and to pray regularly for the people in this church. Do you think you can do this? Yes, I know you can.

Remember, we are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength - in all that we feel, think, say and do. And our neighbour as ourselves. That is the whole gift.

Now, I have some homework and a gift that I would like all the children to collect from me after church. Inside your gift you will find a card. At the back of the card are circles. In the centre circle is you and all the other circles represent your neighbours. You will see that the first circle of 'neighbours' is your family – mother, father, brothers, sisters. The second circles of 'neighbours' is your extended family – cousins, aunts, uncle. The third circle, your friends, the fourth circle the people in your neighbourhood – those who live in the same street or area as you, the fifth is the church – that is us - and the last one is community/city – strangers.

Inside the card I would like you to write down the name of one person for each of the 'neighbour' circles to whom you can show love. Once you have written down a name, I would like to write down some ways that you can show them love. What are the things you think you can show to, or do for, your brother, sister, mother, father to show them love? Once you have done this, I would like you to keep it in a place where you can see it as a reminder to love your neighbour as yourself.

Let us remember that loving God with everything that we are and loving our neighbour as ourselves is the whole gift that we offer to God in love and service.

Let us pray

Dear God,

Be with us this week and help us to show our love for you and others, just as Jesus has reminded us.

Amen