

This Sunday's overall theme focuses on the Lord's compassionate love and how we as Christians are called to reflect that love in our own lives.

And important part of Judaism that has been retained in Christianity is the Decalogue or Ten Commandments. At one time they formed part of the introduction to Anglican Eucharistic worship either in full or in summary. The Summary of the Law, as it is known, is still retained as an optional introduction to our worship. The problem with the commandments is that they were able to promote the twin evils of lip service and fear, especially all those 'thou shalt not's.' In our relationship with God we have to be motivated not by fear but by love. We do not have to keep the commandments so that God will love us. God already loves us, and that is precisely why we keep the commandments. We are to aim for the higher, better way by trying to reflect and represent something of God's love for the world, for everyone.

One of the reasons why Jesus was angry with the traders in the Temple and many others is because they were minimalists in the faith; they were content to keep the rituals and the customs, but they had no sense of justice. They were simply functioning out of duty or tradition. If they prayed, it was probably just with their lips but not their hearts. They supported the religion of habit and show, which was so far removed from what the great Temple and the Law, the commandments represented. No wonder Jesus was furious with them.

Jesus taught and demonstrated a new and more challenging law or commandment. In fact, it wasn't new at all, but its meaning had been watered down over the passage of time. Jesus taught that all God's laws, the Ten Commandments and all the other precepts, could be reduced or summed up in just two. Really it could be said to be one single commandment in two inseparable parts: that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbour, our fellow human being, as we love ourselves. By following this rule of life sincerely, all the commandments would be observed without us having to think about them.

It is what is in the heart that truly matters. This is the emphasis of the gospel and the thrust of all Jesus' teaching. The heart is the inner self, who I really am, and is the source from which all our thoughts and intentions flow. And this

true self is the person who matters to God. It matters to God that we live in a right relationship with God, and consequently with one another in every area of life, that is, with integrity, compassion, fairness, forgiveness when required, and most of all, love – love in its fullest, unselfish and inclusive sense.

May we find courage and confidence to continue to live out in our lives the faith we profess with our lips. May God's grace enable us to live and grow in a Christian life that comes truly from the heart.

*A prayer for this Sunday*

Compassionate and patient God, we are reluctant and slow to make the change of heart we need to live fully as your children. Give us time and grace to understand the extent of your compassion, mercy and love which your Son Jesus showed in its fullness. We ask you to accept us in our poverty of faith and raise us up to live and proclaim your persistent and unconditional love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.