

Come and See 2024: The Way of Love

Two Questions: [Watch on YouTube](#)

Jesus gives us two great commandments: to love the Lord your God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

We've explored the deep and life-changing truth that we love because God has first loved us.

We've explored some of what it means to live this way of love through the ancient and living text of the ten commandments.

But the more we look at Jesus' profound summary of the law, the more the implications grow for the life of the world and for our own lives.

Jesus tells a parable about the Kingdom of heaven.

The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his fields. It's the smallest of the seeds, but when it's grown, it's the greatest of shrubs, and it becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

The command to love your neighbour as yourself is like that. It looks a tiny thing at first, like a mustard seed. 'Be kind to those around you.' But the more you explore the commandment, the more the implications grow.

The Ten Commandments explore the implications for families and marriages and work and society and our desires. And Jesus takes the interpretation of these seven words even further.

Remember the story of the lawyer in Luke 10? This lawyer asks not one question of Jesus, but two. Both are very different from the questions asked by the scribe and the Pharisee in Mark 12 and Matthew 22. They ask what is the first or the greatest commandment of them all, and Jesus offers his response.

In Luke, the lawyer's first question shows that the mustard seed of faith is growing in his heart. He sees the unfolding implications of the way of love and how significant they are.

'What must I do to inherit eternal life?'

Jesus responds with the question of his own: 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?'

A more literal translation would be, 'How do you read the law? What is your principle of interpretation?'

There are many possible answers to that question, but the lawyer answers correctly with Jesus' own summary of the law. This lawyer has understood that love is the fulfilling of the law and the central principle of the law's interpretation.

Jesus confirms this as he replies: 'You have given the right answer. Do this and you will live. The way of love is the way of life.'

Then comes the lawyer's second question, which massively expands the reach of the second great commandment. But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'

When you think about it, this is an absolutely vital question to ask. How do we know we're keeping the commandment unless we have an understanding of who our neighbour is? Surely we're not expected to love without limit?

Jesus' response is of course the best known of his parables, and one of the most famous stories in the world. It's simple, dramatic and powerful.

A man is going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He is set upon by thieves and left half dead. A priest and a Levite go down the road and pass by on the other side, but a Samaritan comes near him and is moved with pity.

He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said take care of him, and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.

And now Jesus asks his own second question as a lawyer, and also of us: 'Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?'

He answered, 'The one who had mercy on him.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

The mustard seed of the second commandment has grown now into a life-shaping tree. The 2nd commandment, like the first, is not a commandment you ever come to the end of understanding or fulfilling. There's no short list of instructions you can tick off at the end of the day, to be sure you will inherit eternal life. These are commandments which have to be lived and practised and learned and rehearsed across the whole of our lives, not to earn our salvation, but in response to our salvation, love offered in response to the love which has been given.

In the parable, Jesus redefines our neighbour. Our neighbour may not be someone from our own family or locality or class or tribe. The Samaritan is crossing all kinds of boundaries to reach out to the man who fell among thieves. The whole world is my neighbour. There is no end to the love which is needed.

There's a vision embedded in this interpretation of the commandment, which is a vision of the Kingdom of God or the reign of God. Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray for God's Kingdom to come and God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. We align ourselves with a vision of a different kind of world.

This is a world in which children are safe, in which old people are loved and cared for, in which there is meaningful work and stable income and homes to live in, a world in which humanity works to restore the environment, not to destroy and degrade it.

The command to love our neighbour as ourselves means the church needs to engage with practical help for those in need and become involved in challenging injustice, peace-making and fighting the degradation of our climate.

This is part of our discipleship, part of living out our Christian faith, part of the way of love. No single person can do all of this of course - we need to work. But each of us will need to play our part and discern our own calling. How are we each called to love our neighbour in the way we invest our time and talents and treasure across the whole span of our lives to build God's Kingdom?

There's one further pairing from the Sermon on the Mount I want to share in this session. It's Jesus' saying about the two masters.

The saying underlines for me how serious and complete and lifelong is the call to follow Jesus and live this way of love. There's no disguising the commitment involved or the choices we need to make - if Christ is calling us, we need to follow and love with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

This is the saying:

No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Next week, in our final session, we'll explore another dimension of what it means to love our neighbour, our willingness and courage in sharing our faith. Come and see.