

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups.

November 5th 2006

Focus: Keys to the Kingdom

Theme: Loving God and Loving one's neighbour



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Mark 12: 28-32

Question asked of Jesus: "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

Background: There would have been no love lost between the expert who asked the question and the Sadducees.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees appear as two distinct parties dating back to the latter half of the second century BC

The Sadducees aimed at removing Judaism from its narrowness and sharing in the advantages of Greek life and culture. They did not accept the oral Law and did not believe in resurrection and life after death.

The Pharisees were a society of zealous religious men who acted under the guidance of scribes and our questioner was one of these scribes. Their fundamental principle was complete separation from non-Jewish elements and they were strictly a legal party but in their zeal for the law they almost deified it and their attitude became merely external, formal and mechanical.

In Judaism there was a kind of double tendency. They expanded the Law limitlessly into hundreds and thousands of rules and regulations. There were 613 official commandments to say nothing of the unofficial ones slipped in. But they also tried to gather up the Law into one sentence, one general statement which would be a compendium of its whole message.

So our questioner was asking Jesus about something which was a very living issue in Jewish thought and discussion

For his answer, Jesus took two great commandments and put them together, implying that the one was impossible without the other.

First: "The Lord our God is one Lord...love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength." (Deuteronomy 6.4)

Second "Love your neighbour as yourself". (Leviticus 19.18)

In its original context this had to do with a man's fellow Jew but Jesus quoted it without qualification and without limiting boundaries. He took an old Law and gave it a new meaning.

Jesus put these two commandments together. Religion to him was loving God and loving men. He would have said that the only way a person can prove he loves God is by showing that he loves men and women.

How do we put this into practice?

If we love God we love what he has made. God made man in his own image. It would be inconsistent to love him but not those who bear his image.

Maybe that image has become distorted in people's lives but we can love them because we see what they were meant to be

Witness: Questions to discuss



1. Do we find it difficult to love God whom we cannot see?

If so, how can we come to love God more?

2. What does it mean to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength?

3. Can we really love our neighbour as much as we love ourselves?

4. Who is our neighbour anyway? What about the people we really cannot get on with? What about terrorists and murderers, those who spoil our country, those who make life difficult for us?

5. Can you love God and not love your neighbour?

6. Can you love your neighbour and not love God?

7. Are there any practical ways in which we might love our neighbours more, both as individuals, as a Small Group and as a Church?