**06 September 2020 Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity**

**Collect**

Almighty God, who called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**First Reading Romans 13.8-14**

8Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet’; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ 10Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

11Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; 12the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; 13let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. 14Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

**Gospel Matthew 18.(15-17) 18-20**

Jesus spoke to his disciples. 18Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.’

**Reflection**

Love is the fulfilling of the law. What a great statement. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Not the law as in police and justices and magistrates, rather it is the law of God. We know that the Jewish nation were a people of the Law – they had a strict discipline and none greater than the rules around hospitality. Welcoming the stranger as if they were God is a basis of their faith.

Jesus says the greatest commandments are these: Love the Lord your God with all that you have; your heart, mind, body and soul, and your neighbour too – love them as you love yourself. It is in this context that we need to read Matthew 18:18-20. Whether you bind up or loose will be bound or loosened in heaven too. Rather a challenging thing to remember when we hold onto grudges and gripes!

Remember that Romans say this “8Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet’; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, **‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ 10Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.”**

Walking in the way of Christ is walking a chosen path, making a deliberate choice to embrace freedom and accept forgiveness for your wrongdoing. Walking the way of Christ is recognising that we need help to live the right way, to live at peace with ourselves and others. Walking in the way of Christ is claiming your place as a child of God, believing that you are loved and lovable too, that God the creator of all things chose to create you. And in you God is well pleased.

FABULOUS! This is Good News!

BUT … with the rights we are given, the right to be known as God’s child, the rights through the grace of God to be forgiven, the right to worship without fear and retribution come some responsibilities too. We must embrace with the same eagerness we grasp at the forgiveness and love of God, the requirement to love. Love without asking if the person is worthy or what they can give us, love God without expecting God to solve all your problems, love without restraint or fear of being made a fool or looking silly.

If we are to love in this reckless, selfless and abandoned way it will be costly. Costly as we will be seen as foolish, as naïve and as unworldly. But we should be carriers of the grace of God, instruments of God’s love and peace, and people of the other world, the Kingdom world where the only rule is love. But remember Matthew, what we loose on earth is loosed in heaven and what we bind on earth is bound in heaven. There is no clause that says that this is only directed to others. When we refuse to love, refuse to forgive, refuse to give another chance then who are we binding in heaven if not ourselves? When we cheat others, when we choose to live in such a way as our neighbour in this nation or another suffers, are we not binding ourselves?

If we want to wholly embrace God and the love that is offered, these aspects of worldly life must end, we must train ourselves as ready for the Kingdom living. Surely to live in the Kingdom may seem rather strange and challenging unless we start practicing now? If Love is the fulfilling of the Law, then I pray that if I bind anything on this earth it will be bound by love, held by love and loosed by love too.

**Prayers by Fiona Vinnacombe**

**concluding with the Lord’s Prayer**

Father God, may our closeness to family and friends make us never shut others out, but always welcome others. Encourage us in outgoing hospitality and keep us from becoming possessive with those we love.  We ask this even at this time of social distancing so that we continue to reach out to all in our church and wider community.

Lord in your mercy …**hear our prayer**

Creator God, increase in us love, not only for the victims but for the perpetrators of evil and violence in our world; for all governments which run on corruption and fear. We pray for a change of heart and attitude, an awakening to a better way of living, and the courage to reject wrong principles.  We pray too for all those who are researching the Covid-19 Pandemic asking that they be successful in finding a way forward for all humanity.

Lord in your mercy …**hear our prayer**

Loving God, we pray for all those returning to school this week. The pupils and the teachers. Walk with them so that they feel safe whilst they still enjoy meeting old and new friends. Keep them brave when they are worried, show them all how to learn from everyone around them, and help them to do their very best.

Lord in your mercy …**hear our prayer**

Lord God, whose Son, Jesus Christ, understood people's fear and pain, we pray for those who are ill or in hospital; surround the frightened with your tenderness; give strength to those in pain; hold the weak in your arms of love and give hope and patience to those who are recovering.

Lord in your mercy …**hear our prayer**

Merciful God, we pray for anyone we know who has recently died and for those remembering anyone whose anniversary of their departing is this week.

Lord in your mercy …**hear our prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank You that You are the source of life and the fountain-spring of love. Help me to carry out Your will for my life and may I love as Christ loves, I pray that I would do no wrong, in thought, word or deed, to my family, friends or neighbours. And help me to show the love of Christ to all with whom I come in contact today

Lord in your mercy …**hear our prayer**

God of the ages, you are the beginning of our journey and our strength as we pause along the way. Hold us by the hand as we grow, show us where to seek you, and guide our steps that we may find you. Give us devoted hearts that we may love you, and your peace when we reach our journey's end. Thank you for helping us to pray; deepen our loving so that as we pray through this coming week we may do it with your heart of compassion.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**