

Dear Friends

‘Love one another.’ It is the simplest commandment and yet surely the most difficult. One New Testament scholar names the irony this way: ‘This new command is simple enough for a toddler to memorise and appreciate, and yet it is profound enough that the most mature believers are repeatedly embarrassed at how poorly they comprehend it and put it into practice.’

Of course it was the command that Jesus gave to his disciples on the night he was betrayed...the command he gave at supper with his friends...his final word to them. As one theologian points out, He doesn't say, "Believe the right things." He doesn't say, "Maintain personal and doctrinal purity." He doesn't say, "Worship like this or attend a church like that." He doesn't even say, "Read your Bible," or "Pray every day," or "Preach the Gospel to every living creature." He says, "Love one another." All of Christianity distilled down to its essence so that maybe we'll pause long enough to hear it. Love one another.

The question that we might reasonably ask is: If we are to love one another what exactly does that mean...how are we to love? Jesus' answer is that we are to love "as I have loved you." In others words we are to love for real with the generous, authentic, down-to-earth love which Jesus showed to all those he met...Zacchaeus, the woman at the well, the woman taken in adultery, the widow of Nain, the deaf and dumb boy, Jairus' daughter and so on. Which means that we have a God who first and foremost wants every one of his children to feel loved. Not shamed. Not punished. Not chastised. Not judged. Not isolated but loved. Follow my example, Jesus says. Do what I do. Love as I love. Live as you have seen me live. Weep with those who weep. Laugh with those who laugh. Touch the untouchables. Welcome the child. Feed the hungry...

I'm writing this letter in the middle of Christian Aid Week and CA reminds us that: In Zimbabwe, the climate crisis is causing aching hunger for many families. 7,000 miles away, the war in Ukraine will drive up food prices in Zimbabwe & globally. We are encouraged to get involved, make gifts in wills, campaign for change, donate to appeals not only with and for Christian Aid but also with and for the Methodist relief and development fund 'All We Can' which seeks to help individuals, groups and churches to respond effectively to the needs of their neighbours in poor communities around the world through supporting practical relief and development initiatives, as well as praying and speaking out.

God help us to love one another so that everyone will know that we are His disciples.

Blessings

Allan

*(Rev J Allan Taylor)*

