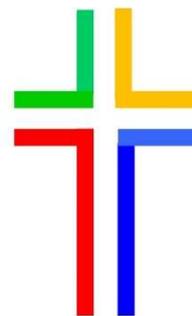


# Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 25 October



Normally, at this time of year, people have to check which Sunday it is that the clocks change. It can be pretty embarrassing turning up for chapel an hour early, and it has happened. However, with these service sheets the time doesn't matter – as long as we all make space in our activities to spend some time with God – we can read them whenever we want.

## PRAYER

Lord, as the days get shorter, the weather gets worse, the news gets more depressing, and we seem to be further away than ever from returning to normality, help us to remember that you are still walking alongside us and, despite our problems, we still have a

great deal to be thankful for. And we also know that if we follow the simple instructions of Jesus to love You and to love our neighbours then we are living as You intended. **Amen**

## READING FOR TODAY Matthew 22:34-46 (NIV)

### The greatest commandment

<sup>34</sup>Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. <sup>35</sup>One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: <sup>36</sup>'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?'

<sup>37</sup>Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" <sup>38</sup>This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." <sup>40</sup>All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'

### Whose son is the Messiah?

<sup>41</sup>While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, <sup>42</sup>'What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?' 'The son of David,' they replied.

<sup>43</sup>He said to them, 'How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him "Lord"? For he says,

<sup>44</sup>"The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'"

<sup>45</sup>If then David calls him "Lord", how can he be his son?' <sup>46</sup>No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

## REFLECTION

Jesus had been having an ongoing verbal sparring match with the religious leaders and so far they had come off worst. They had asked him about his authority, they had asked him questions to catch him out – like the one about paying taxes, and the one about the seven brothers who died and which one the wife would be with in heaven. And then this expert in the law came up to ask which was the greatest commandment. The Pharisees no doubt thought that this would trap Jesus; whichever he chose it would be easy for them to argue that there was another even more important one. But Jesus was a master debater, and knew his Hebrew scriptures inside out, and wasn't going to be caught – he gave them the perfect reply.

He started with a direct quote of verse 5 in Deuteronomy Chapter 6 – a passage that became a central prayer of Judaism and known as the Shema, after its opening word Hear. Jesus said the most important commandment is this 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your

soul and with all your strength'. And he immediately followed it with another quote, saying the second greatest commandment is this 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. The 'love your neighbour' quote is from Leviticus chapter 19 verse 18. Jesus summarised by saying all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

I guess the Pharisees were a bit put out. Jesus had just walked straight out of the trap they had set. But worse was to come. Jesus then posed them a question – whose son is the Messiah? The son of David, they answered. Then Jesus quotes Psalm 110, which is a Psalm by David, and says how come David calls him Lord if he is his son. None of the Pharisees could say a word in reply; from then on they gave up trying to catch Jesus with questions and concentrated on scheming for his physical capture and arrest.

So, what lesson for today can we draw from the answer of Jesus about the greatest commandment. By general agreement there are some 613 laws in the Jewish scriptures (which is an awful lot to remember) but Jesus simplified it all into two laws – love the Lord your God, and love your neighbour as yourself. So there's clear practical guidance for us – we only have to remember these two. But we have to comply with the two – it's no good loving God if we don't love our neighbours; and if we leave God out of it and concentrate on neighbours there is every danger that we will fail to love our neighbours properly.

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

#### **PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

We pray for all those living in areas of the country where the Covid pandemic has led to tight lockdowns. We know that this will be destructive for families unable to meet, for those for whom isolation has returned, and those who have relatives in care homes that they cannot visit. Be with them, Lord, we ask, and give them the comfort and optimism to look towards a better future.

We pray for all those in hospital or under treatment and for all those caring for them. Give them strength and courage in this difficult time.

We pray for all those who are bereaved, whatever the cause, and help them to accept the current restrictive funerals and other constraints. We pray that they will value their previous memories rather than the final farewells.

Amen.

#### **HYMN H&P 691, StF 443**

Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,  
tender and true;  
out of the heart of the Father above,  
streaming to me and to you:  
wonderful love  
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,  
joyfully came;  
came with the helpless and hopeless to  
dwell,  
sharing their sorrow and shame;  
seeking the lost,  
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;  
Why do they roam?  
Love only waits to forgive and forget;  
Home! weary wanderers, home!  
Wonderful love  
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Come to my heart, O Thou wonderful love,  
come and abide,  
lifting my heart till it rises above  
envy and falsehood and pride:  
seeking to be  
lowly and humble, a learner of Thee.

#### **BLESSING**

Jesus said 'Love your neighbour as yourself'.  
As we live our lives this week, help us to love  
others, so that they may see we belong to  
you.  
And the blessing of God, Father Son and Holy  
Spirit, be upon you and remain with you  
always. Amen.