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**Weekly Letter - 12 February 2023**

**Matthew 5.21-37**

**'Allowing yourself to make the good choice'**

One of the reasons why the early Jews in the first century believed Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, was because he brought to life the teachings of Moses, and equally important showed them through his life, works and words how they could you more fully carry out God's will. Why not re-read this passage, and ask yourself, "how can I fulfil Jesus' expectations, for they are way beyond what is seen as ordinary kind behaviour?!! The answer from Jesus Christ is loud and clear, "all you need is love – love of God, love in your heart".

Of course, you will have heard this thousands of times. So, the question is, how do I love so that I can achieve more of what the Christ calls me to do? (I hope this explanation is helpful!!).

Aristotle wrote, "to love is to wish good to someone". For example if you love your husband, your child or a dear friend, this means they are the object of your affection. If your love for them is authentic you will love what is good for them, for love is the direct opposite of using someone. You also begin to see that you seek the good for someone because they were created by God, and God is love, and creates out of love.

Therefore, in desiring the good for someone, you also honour their creator – God. This is one of the reasons why Jesus combines loving God with loving your neighbour. Perhaps you could go further and say that unless you love God, how can you truly love His creation? (Granted, this can be misunderstood!!). By loving God and your neighbour, participating in God's goodness, you take a step towards becoming an authentic Christian/person of God.

Seeking the good of a person will also mean you are taking a step towards knowing God, who is love, and learning how to create relationships where there is no competition, no dominance of one over the other, i.e. you are learning to be what God created you to be.

Why is this important?

Any honest reflection about human nature shows we are deeply corrupted by perverse self-interest. Something our modern culture totally rejects, for all it expects for being human is of 'being decent'. While the Christian challenge is to be a friend of God and this means to share in his love. In other words, for centuries Christians have known that self-interest profoundly twists our desires and our conception of love. Furthermore, deep down we know Christ offers a path away from self-interest, and the dull mediocrity of feeling good about yourself. Christ offers a path to reunify your deeper desire to be human and thereby seek the good for those you meet, i.e. learning to love, to give and delighting in the good you see, and so becoming naturally joyful.

Jesus says, "take my yoke upon you and learn from me". Matthew 11.29. In other words, seek your creator and know that he walks with you, encouraging your desire to do what is good. And of course, we should never forget that Jesus said "I am with you always". Matt. 28.20.

**Stephen**

Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom, will be led by Rev Martin Spain

Cycle of Prayer in the Swansea Region – we will pray for Tabernacle, Mumbles

Tea and Chat/Warm Hub – Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> - 2 pm.

**SAVE THE DATE - Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> February - Quiet Day 10.00 am-2 pm**

Call in to the Church for a time of personal reflection. Prayer Stations available to help your prayer time, plus opportunity to sign up to prayers for the Church

**Dear God,** (Rev Neil Thorogood)

In the midst of the world's need and our hopefulness, hear the prayers we share.

As the wreckage of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria reveals and hides lives lost, communities destroyed, families traumatised and the magnificence of rescuers, help all who suffer.

We pray for those searching and those grieving, for those organising aid and those tending the injured. Let help come and continue, we pray.

As war continues between Ukraine and Russia we pray for justice and for peace. We pray for those fighting and those dying, for those fleeing and those fearing, for those aiding and those searching for an end to conflict.

As conflict scars Southern Sudan, we pray for all caught up and all losing much. We pray for the pilgrimage of peace by the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Moderator of the Church Scotland.

We pray for those seeking safety and those planning violence, that hearts might be held and transformed through your love.

Guide the leaders of the nations and bless the work of the United Nations and all who devote themselves to international community and collaboration in the face of dictatorship, nationalistic arrogance and suspicion.

As communities here stagger under threats from rising prices, services at breaking point, work that is undervalued and streets that are unsafe, we pray for all who care for neighbours and seek a better day.

We pray for people forced to strike and for people whose lives become even harder on strike days. We pray for negotiators and politicians, for those with power in their conversations and those who feel utterly powerless.

Dear God, in the midst of the world's need and our hopefulness, hear the prayers we share. All these thoughts, all these words, all the prayers we cannot put into words, We offer in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**