

Reflection Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October

## John 15:17-27

<sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other.

<sup>18</sup> "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. <sup>19</sup> If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' <sup>21</sup> If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. <sup>22</sup> They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. <sup>23</sup> If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>24</sup> Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. <sup>25</sup> If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. <sup>26</sup> But this is to fulfil what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

<sup>27</sup> "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. <sup>28</sup> And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

"Love each other," said Jesus to his disciples.

To love in Covid times is a challenge. We have to rethink – Metanoia. How do we love in times of social isolation and separation? Many people have said to me in recent months that we are formed to be social beings; to be isolated and not be able to interact is not right. Such living is unhealthy and many are finding their mental health suffering as a result of this separation.

The first words of Jesus in his ministry as recorded by Mark are, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near." The Greek word for repent "Metanoia" – rethink.

Regularly the challenge for the Christian and the Church is to rethink, in the light of the Kingdom. "How we are to respond and live in the current situation?" This is the constant question for the Church. I cannot give the ultimate answer to the question "How do we love one another in the current climate?" All I can say is we must all ask the question.

If the Church is an expression of God's love how are we to be Church in the current situations? How do we support each other within Church communities but also how do we express God's love for those outside the Christian faith community?

I have been in Circuit ministry for over 30 years. I look back to when I left college. When people wanted to contact me, back in 1990, it was necessary to make a phone call to my landline, write a letter or turn up on my doorstep. Equipment in the study consisted of a phone, an Amstrad word processor and pen and paper. Now to contact clergy there is email, text messages, mobile phone calls, Whatsapp, to name but a few. As these changes have come in we have had to rethink how we do things but the basic principle has to be that we love one another. In the past the ways of doing things have changed dramatically but gradually.

Covid 19 has caused rapid change and rapid rethinking. Mission in a Covid and post-Covid world will be very different from mission even in 2019.

I read something yesterday about people in a Church community complaining about on line services not being perfect; the writer pointed out that clergy have never been trained in using technology for such things. In their situation the Clergy were not only leading the worship but also acting as producer, director, sound engineer and cameraperson all at the same time.

In the Vale of Stour Circuit we have not had a faultless experience with technology but we need to be appreciative and thankful to those who have the skills and talents to share and make things much easier than they could have been; when there has been a problem have spent many hours sorting things out. **Techie team thank you for the way you have loved us using your skills.**

There is a guiding principle the Love of Jesus, self-giving, barrier breaking, life enhancing to say but a few things about it.

To love each other is to keep each other safe, respect each other's views, be patient with each other and to seek to support one another however we can. Not one of us is immune from having bad days and struggling; even people of faith.

Let us Love one another.