

Over the last couple of weeks, Sue has spoken to you of Jesus' great commands, Love God and love your neighbour as yourself.

Last week, she explored 'who is our neighbour' and this week we're thinking about 'why we should be good neighbours'.

For Christians, the answer is simple, because Jesus commands us to.

He said quite clearly, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'.

He didn't say, 'if you can find a moment in your busy life, could you give Joe Bloggs a hand, with the garden or do a bit of shopping for Mrs. Bloggs', but only if you've got the time and it's convenient.

He made it quite clear that he means us to help, whenever or wherever that help is needed. No excuses.

R.H.Benson wrote, 'No man can be a friend of Jesus Christ, who is not a friend to his neighbour).

Sue explained in last week's sermon, exactly who are neighbours are. They're not just the people who live either side of us, which was my childhood understanding, they're all the people God loves, and he loves us all and he loves us equally.

We can find that challenging can't we? How can God love the criminals, the down and outs and all those on the margins of society, as well as you and me? But the amazing thing he does

God might not like some of the things I do, but he never stops loving me. Just like human parents. And he is asking me to love others in the same way. Sometimes, I find that a big ask. Like many of you I guess, there are people around whom I find challenging. But I have a horrible feeling that they probably find me challenging too.

In a few minutes, Sue will be asking Charlotte and Jemima's parents and godparents, if they believe and trust in God, and in Jesus Christ.

And it seems to me that's the crux of this matter. We can only obey, if we can first learn to trust.

Many of you will have been Scouts or Guides in your time. I was a guide and I loved it. I learned so much. One of the laws in both movements, at that time, was a Guide or a Scout obeys orders. Lord Baden Powell started the Scout movement after his experiences in the army in South Africa, where obeying orders was vital.

Now, I've never been in the army, but I don't think I would care to obey the orders, of someone I didn't trust. But I have learned to trust Jesus and I am happy to try and obey his commands. I'm not saying that I get it right every time, far from it, but I am learning to trust Him more and more the older I get. (There's got to be some advantage in growing older.). So far, in the long run, He has never let me down.

Now before his ascension, Jesus gave his disciples another instruction, he said, 'go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.'

So just as Charlotte and Jemima's parents and godparents will shortly be promising, to guide them to faith in Jesus Christ, so we must be striving in everything we do, to bring people to faith. To show them what it means to us, to be Christians. Show them the peace and joy that a Christian faith can bring to their lives. Helping them to read the Bible and to discover God's love for all of his creation and so come to understand, that God has always kept his promises to his people. Sometimes, we might find it difficult to speak about our faith but we can always show God's love for them, by the things we do. Walk the walk as well as talk the talk. It is said that St. Francis told his disciples, 'Go out and preach the gospel and if you must, use words'.

This is what God is asking of each one of us. And in order that we have half a chance of doing this, Jesus also commanded us, to share bread and wine together, to remember the sacrifice he made on the cross, in order that we can be in a relationship with our loving, forgiving God. That way, we are strengthened to follow all Christ's commands to us. We all need the love and support of a church family. In a few minutes, as part of God's worldwide family, we'll be welcoming Charlotte and Jemima into God's family.

Just imagine what our world would be like, if people truly loved one another and cared for one another.

In the end though, it all comes back to trust. Others may recognise Christ in us but they'll need our encouragement, to take that step of faith, so that they can trust Christ for themselves and know his Holy Spirit in their lives.

Evelyn Underhill had a wonderful illustration of this.

Imagine looking at a great cathedral, a mass of grey stone, with the windows showing a dark dusty colour. It doesn't look very cheerful, but if we push open the doors and go in, we suddenly see that all the windows are brightly coloured stained glass. But we can't see that glory if we just stand outside, demanding proof that the inside is beautiful. We have push open the door and go in.

Now we come to a rather special part of this morning's service, when Sue will baptise Charlotte and Jemima into God's family and they will begin their journeys of faith. And I pray that Zoe and Philip will always be part of a loving Christian community, which will help them to bring their daughters to a faith in Jesus Christ, learning to trust God and to follow his commands.

Then they will indeed shine as lights in the world, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.