

Speaking to the soul



Loving your neighbour

Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:37-40

The battle of words between Jesus and the Jewish leaders had got to fever pitch. They had challenged him about his authority, and the Sadducees had just come up with a really awkward question about the resurrection. Now the Pharisees got together to push Jesus to the limit. They asked him a question they often discussed among themselves: “What is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” If Jesus tripped up on this question, they could label him as a blasphemer. But Jesus gave them the classic Jewish answer: loving God with everything you’ve got is the first commandment, and the second is loving your neighbour as yourself.

Loving God should still be our absolute priority, and we need to do it with our heart, soul and mind – every part of us needs to be tuned into loving God. Following him can never be a hobby or something we do on our days off. It needs to shape all our thinking and planning as well as our actions and relationships. When we love God completely, we will start to see our neighbours in the way that he does. Like us, our neighbours were made in the image of God. They have eternal importance, and, whether we feel close to them or not, they need to be shown love and respect.

The Pharisees and Sadducees made everything so complicated, entering into sophisticated debate on every minute detail of the law. Jesus wanted them to see that it was really very simple. They needed to come to God like children. They needed to love God first of all, and love their neighbours in the same way that they loved themselves. What could be simpler?

QUESTION

What will loving your neighbour like yourself mean for you today?

PRAYER

Loving Father, help me to love you and those around me more fully each day. Amen

*Photograph - After Palm Sunday, The Royal Chapel,
Hampton Court Palace*

