



Sunday Reflection

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 5 May 2024

Easter 6

**The Rector will preach at St John's
& St Margaret's:-**

We come together to rejoice in Christ's love and to ask ourselves how we can show his love to others.

"You are my friends if you do what I command you."

John 15:14

An illustration to set the scene

Rushing to an appointment, Ayesha took a wrong turn.

Turning left, with the aim of turning around and heading back in the direction from which she'd come, she ended up in a tight dead-end road.

The only way out was backwards, but lack of space and parked cars made reversing extremely difficult.

For a moment she thought she wasn't going to be able to get out at all.

Then a woman appeared from one of the houses and headed towards her car.

Ayesha's stress levels rose even higher as she imagined the woman was going to rebuke her for using the street as a turning space.

Instead the woman said, ***"This is a dreadful corner. If it would help I can move my car forward, or I can see you out."***

And she guided Ayesha until she was able to get back onto the main road.

Today's Gospel teaching

Jesus tells us that he has loved us just as the Father has loved him and he asks us to abide in his love.

How do we do that?

The answer is by keeping his commandments.

He goes on to link this love with joy.

You might wonder how keeping a list of commandments can possibly bring joy.

You might imagine writing them down in a notebook, or displaying a list on the wall.

But there's no need.

There is only one: ***"love one another as I have loved you"***.

No longer servants, but friends, we are to do exactly as Jesus himself has done.

His whole life has been an illustration of what it is to love, to the extent that he was prepared to lay down his life.

There is no greater love than this, and this is the quality of love that Jesus asks of us – the love that brings joy, to ourselves and others.

The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines the noun “love” as ***“a strong feeling of affection; a great interest or pleasure in something; or a person or thing you love”***.

Jesus encourages us to see love as a verb, and he tells us to love one another, pure and simple – everything else will follow.

How can we apply the teaching to our own lives?

And so back to the opening picture I painted in your mind’s eye.

The resident who helped Ayesha out of her tricky driving situation did something.

Although they had never met and probably never would again, she was kind and understanding.

You can tell whether people love you by what they do, not by what they say.

People around us know who we are.

They see us come to church and they expect us to follow this demonstration of faith with actions of love.

They know that if we don't follow Jesus' commandment to love, we really let him down.

It's a huge responsibility – one that should inform all our actions.

It might be a relief to know that we aren't required to feel anything.

The dictionary's "***strong feeling of affection***" isn't a prerequisite for the love that Jesus commands us to show.

But we are required to do something.

It's a choice we have to make and a question we constantly have to ask ourselves – how can I love this person in this situation?

If it doesn't change how we feel, it doesn't matter much, although, strangely, we might find that it does.

If we change what we do, it changes how we think, which in turn affects what we feel.

If Jesus loved, but did nothing, what good would that have done?

It would have changed nothing.

Instead, he came and he did, and the world was changed.

His love led him to say that his disciples were not servants, but friends.

This is the example he's calling us to follow, as his friends who are prepared to join him on the way of love.

We all have different opportunities to love.

Some of us may be called to make large sacrifices for others, but we can all notice the small needs of others, like the woman who helped Ayesha.

And we can choose to demonstrate Christ's love in those small things which often cost us little but transform a difficult situation for the recipient of our loving care.

*"You are my friends if you do what I command you."
John 15:14*

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