

KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH ONLINE NOTICE BOARD - 48

PLEASE NOTE:

Though we are still restricted in what we can do in the context of our services of worship it has been decided that it's time to move from our temporary Saturday morning meeting time back to our more regular Sunday morning service.

**From November 8th we will meet each week in church on
Sundays at 10.45 am.
We look forward to seeing you!**

Love defines us. Love shows what we truly are. Love decides our destiny – whether we have lived and acted in love or have neglected love in favour of self-interest. *Love* is inseparable from *faith*. 'Faith' bereft of love is a dead faith, it is no faith at all. Paul described living, saving faith as 'faith that works by love'. James says the same when he says that 'faith without works is dead'. John says where love is God is: 'if we love one another, God is in us and his love is made complete in us'.

Love defines us as love defines God – *God is love*. Love defines Jesus Christ – *the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me*. Love defines the Holy Spirit – *the fruit of the Spirit is love.... The greatest of these is love!*

Love defines us – *what I do for others is the measure of my love*.

What reveals who and what I am, what defines me and exposes the person I really am isn't what I *do*, but *what I do for others*. The Pharisees and priests were great at *doing* but not good at *doing for others*. Jesus exposed the worthlessness of their shallow self-centred activity – think of the Priest and Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

What matters most isn't my involvement in painstaking ritual or ceremonial services of worship. This has its place but doesn't reveal the person I truly am. The Old Testament prophets were forever condemning the empty, showy routine ceremonial rituals of the people of Israel. There was no shortage of ceremony and services – but all of it was worthless because it lacked love – think of Paul's words at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 13.

It isn't even what I *believe* that reveals who I am. James tells us that the devils believe; they believe with such intensity that they tremble. Nor am I measured by my *words*. Jesus warns of many who say *Lord, Lord* but to whom he will respond by saying that he never knew them – that they are strangers to him. '*Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?*' And I will

say, 'I never knew you'. (Matthew 7.22) John tells us: *Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.* (1 John 3.18) Nor do my feelings of pity and compassion reveal who I am. James warns that out of pity we may say 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill' but if you do not supply their bodily needs what's the good of that? (James 2.16) I'm certainly not defined by my race, my colour, achievements, family, nation or by my good manners and breeding. None of these reveal the truth of who I am.

The Good Samaritan is an example of *love*. He is not presented to us as an example of what to believe, or how or where to worship; he's not an example of how we are to speak; he's not held up as an example of good breeding or good manners. He is simply an example of *love in action*. It is what he *did for another* that is our example. He shows what it is to be a *neighbour*. To be a neighbour is to *do what is for the good of the other person*. We're told the Good Samaritan 'showed *mercy*'. The word *mercy* here means kindness, compassion, practical sympathy. Jesus says it is mercy, practical sympathy, *love* that is decisive on the day of judgement: *Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me' ... Inasmuch as you **did** it to the least you **did** it to me.*

Faith is hollow unless love is at its heart. *Faith that works by love* unites me to Jesus and is the proof that I am united to Jesus. Any other sort of 'faith' is dead. Jesus gives us the parable of the Good Samaritan, the pattern of active love – then says: 'Go and do the same'. This was the answer Jesus gave to the question: 'What must I do to have eternal life?'