

The Golden Rule

20 7 14

O God, the protector of all who trust in you
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:
increase and multiply upon us your mercy;
that with you as our ruler and guide
we may pass through things temporal
that we may not lose our hold on things eternal.

Again our text is from the end of the Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 7 verse 12:

**'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you;
for this is the law and the prophets**

Last week, I took the liberty of departing from the scriptures set for the day by preaching on Matthew 7 v7, the well known text on prayer: **'Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.'** Here, Jesus is summing up the persistence that we should have and the confidence that we should feel when we pray to God our Father in the name of God the Son and in the power of God the Holy Spirit. Here, Jesus is reassuring us that God, like a good father, will give us, his children, the genuine things that we truly need.

Today, I'd like again to take the liberty of passing over today's set passages from scripture which you've just heard and returning to the verse that follows the inspiration for last week's sermon, Matthew 7 v12, the verse that is known as the

Golden Rule: 'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; or if you prefer – treat others as you'd like to be treated.

If Man is truly the measure of all things, then the Golden Rule is that by which we can as people measure our behaviour. We are called to be the children of God. We are called to live our lives informed by good Christian principles which are rooted in the 10 Commandments, part of our rich Jewish heritage as Christians. We are called to love God and we are called to love our neighbour even as we love ourselves – not to lie, steal, murder, envy or commit adultery but to respect. And what better way to respect others than by the way we treat others, treating them as we ourselves would like to be treated ?

If we were to follow such a rule, then all we do will be in the best interest of those with whom we interact. As a teacher, it was sometimes necessary to discipline my pupils and to set them challenging tasks to help them master the subject studied. Love always ultimately has the best interest of the beloved at heart so a classroom which has hard work, right effort and real achievement as its aim and goal is a healthy environment in which to learn. But the best teacher knows that it is important for each individual pupil in their class to be recognised as an individual with individual needs, an individual who is encouraged and praised for being the person he or she truly is. The best work is produced when the pupil and what is produced is personally valued by the teacher.

But outside the classroom, back to our everyday lives here in France, is not the Golden Rule key in unlocking better behaviour ? Courtesy on the roads, not least

on roundabouts; patience in supermarkets, not least at the check-out; stopping to help someone who has accidentally fallen over in the street having tripped over an uneven pavement. It is the recognition of others as individuals with individual needs that makes for a caring, Christian society.

But what of those who behave badly: those who 'dis' people; those who try to make other people's lives miserable, sad ? Sadly, I wonder if their individual unhappiness, anger, unease is being off-loaded onto others, transferring their wretchedness by making others feel as sad as they are by the way they treat others. Kill joys, they want to stifle the smile on another's face, diminish others by blocking the light and stifling the laughter which should typify being a child of God.

Well, Jesus offers us a positive way of living our life. I'd positively recommend it to you as a default position for being a Christian. But, as ever, it's up to you, down to you and your fault if you choose not to, not to treat others as you would like to be treated, **to do to others as you would have them do to you**

I have spoken in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

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