

All Saints – the golden rule

30 10 16

Almighty God,
you have knit together your elect
in one communion and fellowship
in the mystical body of your Son, Christ our Lord;
grant us grace so to follow your blessed saints
in all virtuous and godly living
that we may come to those inexpressible joys
that you have prepared for those who truly love you.

Our text may be found in today's gospel and is Luke chapter 6 and verse 31:

'Do to others as you would have them do to you.'

Tomorrow is All Hallows' Eve, Hallowe'en; Tuesday – All Saints' Day, Toussaints; and Wednesday – All Souls'. We'll celebrate All Saints' today and tomorrow evening, if you're lucky, you won't be troubled by Trick or Treat. And on Thursday, at our regular service of Holy Communion, we will be remembering some of the names recorded in our Book of Remembrance at our All Souls' service.

Last year, and, if you have the energy, motivation and skill, you could read last year's sermon on our Web site, I asked two questions:

- Who is a saint ?
- What does that mean for us ?

Today, I'd like to look at one tiny piece of Jesus' teaching, our text today, which is a key, a cornerstone to living the good moral life, to being a saint:

'Do to others as you would have them do to you.'

On the mountainside, Jesus is teaching the crowd and one of the gems of wisdom from the Sermon on the Mount is what is known as the Golden Rule. This jewel of practical, positive advice is not unique to Christianity and Judaism but is also expressed in other faiths and philosophies. Essentially, the Golden Rule embodies the positive expression of love, of agape, which is the distinguishing badge, the hallmark of our faith as Christians.

What it does is to express a clear criterion by which to judge our behaviour – treat others as you'd like to be treated. This simple test of what is right or not is whether or not you'd like the same done to you. If Pope Francis is right and we are engaged in a war of love with the followers of Isis, Islamic State, or whatever name that particular brand of fundamentalist extremists are known by, then surely the Golden Rule is a measure of rightness. Would they want to be blown up because they fail to meet the criteria for righteousness set by another group of believers? Would they want to be killed when they are celebrating a wedding or worshipping in a church or mosque or just going out to enjoy themselves simply because they are different from other people?

Certainly, the heart of the Golden Rule is one word popular amongst the young – 'respect'. If we do unto others as we would be done by, then we are respecting other people by giving them the same status as we would like to have. It is simply

saying that to respect is to see that everyone has value as a child of God, that we all have worth, dignity, a right to be treated with respect. It is simply putting into practice the idea that we should love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

That said, the problem lies with those who are uneasy in their own skin. Sadly, those who are truly sad, who basically dislike themselves, even hate themselves, having contempt for who they are, for what they are, can be the ones who would treat others badly because truly they fail to appreciate and value themselves as people.

So today, when we celebrate the fact that we all have the potential to be saints here and now by what we say and do, let me simply highlight a way that will help us on the road to being truly good in our own self –

'Do to others as you would have them do to you.'

Can you ? Will you ? Good luck !

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

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

30th October 2016

