



# **Peninsula City Church**

## **The Kingdom of God**

**Preaching the Gospel as a way of life**

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# The Background

## Refocusing on What Really Counts

**Q.** What is the trademark, which God has consistently refocused the Church on as a priority?

There are a lot of things that we, as Christ-followers, could mention here. For example, to go and make disciples, reach out to the poor and hungry, love God, and pray, to name a few things. All of these and many others are important. However, there is one, which stands out, and it is this we will briefly review today. It will be reviewed under our current theme of 'Preaching the Gospel as a way of life.' Over the last number of weeks, we have heard various ways in which we can do it. Today I would simply like to add something to what has been said so far.

We may or may not know that the Gospel is 'Good News,' which was given to humanity. It is the Good News concerning the truth that God is for people. It has always been that way, whether we have been able to see it, feel it, or even believe it or not. However, it has been the case, though, as people, we have rebelled against Him and continued doing our own thing. We have rejected His ever-present gift of a new life. We have run after other gods of all shape, passions, and our making.

Up until now, we have been told what the Gospel is and how we can live it out as a way of life. We have heard that we can preach or proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God in words as well as by the way we live our lives. None of what has been given to offer a formula/s or method/s. Instead, simply to say that we need to be doing the best that we can where we find ourselves having been sent or placed by God. When we received God's gift of new life, we were sent out to share the Good News with those around us. That is, we were to either sow the seed of the Good News or water it by saying or doing what the Holy Spirit told us to say or do.

So, today, we will not recover any of this material again or be told anything new. However, we will look at the 'why' behind what we need to do as the Gospel is preached as a way of life. That is, we will look at what is God's rationale for the Good News. Likewise, we will review the motivation behind why we preach the Gospel. Some things that will be helpful to think about from today's discussion are:

- What is God's perspective of His Gospel of the Kingdom?
- How did Jesus preach the Gospel as a way of life to impact His followers?
- How are we to live from the perspective that Jesus came to refocus us on as His followers?

In dealing with questions like these, it is essential to know what we believe, why we believe it and how we respond.

### **1. Why does God want one priority of the Gospel of the Kingdom proclaimed?**

**Q.** What counts to God when proclaiming the Gospel?

There are various features of the Good News, the message, practice and living it as a way of life. But why do we 'Preaching the Gospel as a way of life?' An understandable place to start to understand this would be with what Jesus called the greatest commands. To Jesus, these commands were the basis of the Good News of the Kingdom of God. They were not new, but how Jesus explained them was new. He saw them as the foundation to the whole Torah.

Jesus, in responding to a question from the religious leaders of His day, went on to point out what really counts to God. He said that to love God would have to be the greatest thing that any person can do. He then combined with this what He called the second and equally important command. It is Good News to those who have experienced God's love and are to share that love with their neighbours. The importance of this becomes evident as the Scripture is consulted within its context.

For example, Jesus in Mark's Gospel, in response to a question of the foremost command, said,

<sup>28</sup> "One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realised that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, '**Of all the commandments, which is the most important?**' <sup>29</sup> Jesus replied, '**The most important commandment is this:** "Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord, <sup>30</sup> and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. <sup>31</sup> The second is equally important: "Love your neighbour as yourself." **No other commandment is greater than these.**' <sup>32</sup> The teacher of religious law replied, 'Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other, <sup>33</sup> and I know it is important to love Him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbour as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the Law" (Mk 12:28-33 NLT).

In Matthew's account, Jesus, in response to the question is shorter, but still carries the same weight. That is,

<sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the Law of Moses? <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind <sup>38</sup> This is **the first and greatest commandment.** <sup>39</sup> **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" (Matt 22:36-40 NLT).

Also, Luke's reported Jesus recorded Him being asked by an expert in the Jewish religious Law a question,

<sup>25</sup> "One day, an expert in religious Law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: 'Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?' <sup>26</sup> Jesus replied, 'What does the Law of Moses say? How do you read it?' <sup>27</sup> The man answered, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' <sup>28</sup> '**Right!**' Jesus told him. 'Do this, and you will live!'" (Lk 10:25-28 NLT).

On this matter, it has been said that,

"It is the Lord our God who is to be loved with a completeness of devotion which is defined by the repeated 'all.'"<sup>1</sup>

However, these statements of Scripture are not part of the Ten Commandments. (Although, having said this, these two Commandments could be a summary of the Ten Commandments). That is, the first and greatest commandment, according to Jesus, is actually from Deuteronomy (the second reading of the Law to a new generation preparing to enter the promised land) and not from Exodus where the Ten Words (or Commandments) are first recorded. It comes from the 'Shema' from Deut 6:4-5 and has become the vital prayer within the Jewish prayer book. It is the first piece of Scripture that a Jewish child learns. The title Shema comes from the first verb in the section of Scripture because the word 'hear' or 'Listen' in Hebrew is Shema.

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<sup>1</sup> Lane, W.L. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of Mark*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 432.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! <sup>5</sup> And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength” (Deut 6:4-5 NLT).

The command does not appear in Scripture before this reference in the Shema in Deuteronomy. It has been stated that,

“The command to love is central because the whole book (Deuteronomy) is concerned with the renewing the covenant with God, and although the renewal demanded obedience, that obedience would be possible only when it was a response of love to the God who had brought the people (Israel) out of Egypt and was leading them into the promised land... The injunction to love was **based on the precedent of God’s love**, which had been shown to the Israelites principally in the Exodus, and in a larger context, in their election and calling from the time of Abraham.”<sup>2</sup>

On this matter, Patrick Miller has pointed out that,

“With this chapter, we come to the pivot around which everything else in Deuteronomy revolves, the Shema or Great Commandment, as it has also come to be known (6:4-5). In turn, the statutes and ordinances explicate in specific and concrete ways the meaning of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 for the life of Israel. That is why Jesus can later say that all the law and the prophets hang on this commandment (Matt 22:40).”<sup>3</sup>

Having said that, when we then come to the command ‘loving your neighbour as yourself,’ we find that it comes from the book of Leviticus and not the book of Exodus or the Ten Words. It was the practical extension of the Shema and living it out, having experienced the love of God. According to Jesus, His followers were to love others with the same divine love, i.e. agape, this is Good News. It is on this basis that the divine gift of love can be able to be extended to our neighbour. So, within the literary context of Leviticus chapter 19, it is the LORD’s instructions to Moses on what he wanted to say to Israel on living a holy life before Him. That is,

<sup>1</sup> “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup> ‘Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy...”’ <sup>37</sup> ‘You shall thus observe all My statutes, and all My ordinances, and do them: I am the LORD” (Lev 19:1-2,37 NASB).

“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself; I am the LORD” (Lev 19:18 NASB).

The word for love used here in Hebrew in the Leviticus passage is the verb אָהַב (i.e. the word *ahav*). It is more general in its use than the word for this love, i.e. agape used in the New Testament. The Hebrew carries various nuances of meaning, e.g. to desire earnestly or to breath after in the sense of longing for, a fervent and passionate disposition of the mind, tenderness, and fullness of affection, or merely to love or even to delight.<sup>4</sup>

While the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint or LXX) of this passage uses the Greek verb found in the New Testament, i.e. ἀγαπήσεις (i.e. *agapeseis* from the *agapao* [ἀγαπάω] a verb or *agape* [ἀγάπη] and noun), it can be explained as the vulnerable and unconditional love. However, as with all God-given gifts, this ‘all divine gift love’ from God can only be known by

<sup>2</sup> Cragie, P.C. *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Deuteronomy*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 169-170.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, P.D. *Deuteronomy*. Interpretation Series. (Louisville, KN: John Knox Press, 1990), 97.

<sup>4</sup> Gesenius, William. *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*. (trans., by). Tregelles, Samuel Prideaux. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 15-16. Davidson, Benjamin. *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 9. Wilson, William. *Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies*. (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing, n.d.) 260-261.

someone on the way to becoming or a Christ-follower. That is why it needs to be communicated, lived out and given by Christ-followers to those around us. Now that is Good News. A helpful definition is the seeking of the highest good of another person, regardless of whether they respond or repay this love or not.

The immediate setting is Lev 19:11-18, and the structure of the passage in Leviticus is fascinating as it is set out in four paragraphs that all close with the motive clause “I am the Lord” (vv 12,14,16,18).<sup>5</sup> Wenham points out that various words used by Moses, to build both a literary and theological highpoint to the section under review, has used ‘neighbour’.

The Hebrew noun for neighbour used here in Leviticus is רֵעֵךְ (i.e. *rea*). The word has various nuances of meaning, e.g. a friend, companion, fellow, another person, or fellow citizen.<sup>6</sup> In the New Testament, the word is πλησίον (*plesion*) used some seventeen times (used as ‘near’ once, and ‘neighbour’ 16 times) in the New Testament carries the meaning near, close by hence coming to be transliterated the neighbour, the one who is near or close by us. Yet, to keep things in context, it has been said that

“Love and neighbour are as wide-ranging in their scope and meaning in Hebrew as the corresponding English terms. Jesus and Paul were not stretching the meaning of these verses by claiming that all our duties towards our fellow humanity were summed up in this command (Matt 22:39-40; Rom 13:9).”<sup>7</sup>

However, according to the Jewish understanding, it had come to mean any Hebrew of the nation of Israel.<sup>8</sup> In his *Laws of Counsel*, Maimonides stated, “It is a mitzvah (commandment) for every human to love each and everyone from Israel as he loves his own body.”<sup>9</sup> Yet, the Weymouth translation has it as “fellow man.”<sup>10</sup> So if that is the case, how can this be interpreted as only loving those of the nation of Israel or Jews? From a Jewish perspective, Rabbi Ron Kronish has said that

“According to some commentators, the Hebrew word for ‘neighbour,’ refers only to Jews... Looking at this, it seems clear that ‘your companion’ falls into the same category as ‘your brother’ and ‘the children of your people,’ all explicitly referring to one’s fellow Jew. So who are our ‘neighbours’ or ‘close companions’ today? Are they only our fellow Jews? Can we extend the meaning to include ‘human beings’ in general as our companions in our country or in the global village? Or is this too much to ask? ... We need to love our fellow Jews as brothers and sisters in a historic, unique collective family, and at the same time, we need to love the stranger as we love ourselves, to treat the non-Jew with the same dignity that we would wish and envision for ourselves.”<sup>11</sup>

So, C.S. Lewis so fittingly understood it when he said,

“Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbour; act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Wenham, G.J. *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Leviticus*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 266-267.

<sup>6</sup> Gesenius, *Genesis’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, 722.

<sup>7</sup> Wenham, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Leviticus*, 269.

<sup>8</sup> “Plesion.” <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/plesion.html> (3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021).

<sup>9</sup> “Be Loving to Your Neighbor as You Would Yourself.” [http://www.hillel.org/jewish/textstudies/learn\\_love/love\\_neighbor.htm](http://www.hillel.org/jewish/textstudies/learn_love/love_neighbor.htm) (3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021).

<sup>10</sup> “Mark 12.” <http://weymouthbible.com/mark/12.htm> (3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021).

<sup>11</sup> Rabbi Ron Kronish serves as director of the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI), based in Jerusalem. “Loving your neighbor: Torah Studies.” <http://www.jewishaz.com/jewishnews/050506/torah.shtml> (3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021).

<sup>12</sup> Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 2001), 132.

There is a command that flows on from this and has been seen by some within Christianity and other faiths as a wise saying, described as the 'Golden Rule.'<sup>13</sup> But, it was more than just a wise saying to Jesus Christ and the writer of the New Testament. This powerful truth and commandment are stated relatedly throughout the New Testament. The tense is always the same, i.e. it is in the indicative (i.e. a simple statement of fact or an actual incidence from the writer or speaker's viewpoint) future active second person singular. For example,

<sup>43</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour, and hate your enemy,'<sup>44</sup> but I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:43-44 NASB).

We are not sure where Jesus got the phrase "and hate you neighbour, other than He said that they heard it said. By whom we do not know, this is the only place that is mentioned in the Bible.

On this point, the English writer, philosopher, and Christian apologist C.K. Chesterton light-heartedly once said, "The Bible tells us to love our neighbours, and also to love our enemies; probably because generally, they are the same people."<sup>14</sup>

However, the New Testament continues,

1. "...You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt 19:19 NASB).
2. "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'" (Matt 22:39 NASB).
3. "The second is this, 'You shall love your (ind fut act 2<sup>nd</sup> pers sing) neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mk 12:31 NASB).
4. "And he answered and said, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself'" (Lk 10:27 NASB).

Interestingly, when we get into the letters of the New Testament, we do not find the command to love God. However, we do see the command to love your neighbour. For example,

1. "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for those who love his neighbour has fulfilled the law" (Rom 13:8 NASB).
2. "For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'" (Rom 13:9 NASB).
3. "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'" (Gal 5:14 NASB).
4. "If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself,' you are doing well" (Jas 2:8 NASB); cf. "So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty" (Jas 2:12 NASB).

It is this highest practice of love, which has others as its single-minded focus, not you. It is entirely selfless, vulnerable, and unconditional since it is of divine origin. The most significant expression of this love is the Father, Son and Spirit throughout the Scripture. It is not of divine origin if you do not express it in this selfless, vulnerable, and unconditional way. That is, "...He Himself first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19b), next as a result; we are to love Him (Matt 22:36-40; Mk 12:28-33; Lk 10:25-28; and Deut 6:4-5), and finally. As a result, we are to love others this way. John Calvin has pointed out that,

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<sup>13</sup> "The Golden Rule." <http://www.unification.net/ws/theme015.htm#1> (23<sup>rd</sup> January 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Ahlquist, Dale. *G.K. Chesterton: The Apostle of Common Sense*. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2003), 13.

“We are not only inclined to love ourselves more than we should, but all our energy is given toward this. Self-love is the blinding parent of all iniquities. When we are focused on loving ourselves, we forget and neglect our brothers and sisters.”<sup>15</sup>

So, the loving of your neighbour is the ‘seeking of the highest good of another person, regardless of whether they respond or repay this love or not.’ Now that is Good News, and why God wants, one priority of the Gospel of the Kingdom proclaimed. It is a priority of preaching the Gospel as a way of life.

## 2. So, why did Jesus have to say what He did to His followers?

**Q.** What did Jesus mean when He said a new commandment?

Anyone would think that is all one would need to know and do with what has already been said. However, not according to Jesus, who had spent three to three and a half years with His closest followers. John, in his account, recorded a commandment given by Jesus. John was the only one to record this, and we would be the poorer for it if he had not done so. If we did not have John’s account, we would not have known that Jesus instituted this new commandment. This command is reminiscent of the one from the Torah in Leviticus 19:18, which states,

“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself; I am the LORD” (Lev 19:18 NASB).

It was in addition to,

“The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God” (Lev 19:34 NASB).

James, in his letter, said that when anyone does this,

“...you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself,’ you are doing well” (Jas 2:8 NASB); cf. “So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty” (Jas 2:12 NASB).

So, why did Jesus have to say this to His followers? Well, when He met with His followers for His last Passover, He gave it to them because they were expected to love each other, not just their neighbour. That is, it would be the indicator, maker, or branding of their genuine love for the world around them as followers of Jesus Christ. Jesus said this three times to His followers,

<sup>34</sup> “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another <sup>35</sup> **by this** all people will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34-35 NASB).

<sup>12</sup> “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you... <sup>17</sup> This I command you, that you love one another” (Jn 15:12,17 NASB).

Here the Lord did not say as you have loved yourself but love one another. However, this new commandment also says to love as Jesus has loved them. How did He love them? Well, all four Gospel accounts record this in word and deed. John though also recorded He loved His own to the end, in Jn 13:1.

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<sup>15</sup> Calvin, John. “Leviticus 19:18.” <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom05.iii.ii.html?highlight=leviticus#highlight> (3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021).

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1 NASB).

One of the things that stands out here in this section of John’s record is that Jesus loved His own even to the end, and that would have included Judas Iscariot. He served Judas by washing his feet (Jn 13:5,11,12) even though He knew that he was about to betray Him. It is incredible to think that He included Judas Iscariot, Jn 13:1 since he was with the twelve.

So, Jesus showed His followers how to put this new command into practice. It was apparent even in this Passover meal as He loved Judas to the very end. It is the way that people will know that they are Christ-followers. In other words, this is their branding. It was despite how others would treat them. Although Jesus loved Judas until the end, it was not until he had left the meal that Jesus gave this new commandment. That is,

<sup>31</sup> “Therefore when he (Judas) had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now is (or was) the Son of Man glorified, and God is (or was) glorified in Him; <sup>32</sup> if God is glorified in Him (Most early mss. do not contain this phrase), God will also glorify Him ([see Is 49:3] although some MMS read *if God has been glorified in Him*) in Himself and will glorify Him immediately. <sup>33</sup> Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ <sup>34</sup> A new commandment (or order) I give to you, that you (*too*) love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this, all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:31-35 NASB).

So, things had now changed in the room now that Judas had left and gone off to prepare to betray Jesus. Jesus then spoke to the remaining eleven, pointing out that He had the authority as God to give a new command. He built on Lev 19:18 from the Torah. Jesus instructed them on the new life and the new way to see the Torah and live it out.

Jesus had lifted the bar higher than ever before when He gave this new commandment. He said that they were not just to love their neighbour, but each other. It was how to ‘Preaching the Gospel as a way of life.’ Jesus added to this command the marker, “as I have loved you.” They had all seen how Jesus had unconditionally loved them, regardless of their failures and selfishness. Whereas Jesus’ practical example of this love was evident for all of them. So, how is your love for one another? John, in interpreting what Jesus had said here, went even further in his first letter when he said,

<sup>7</sup> “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love; <sup>9</sup> by this, the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us” (1 Jn 4:7-12 NASB)

John, building on this he took it to another level again when he said,

<sup>20</sup> “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup> And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also” (1 Jn 4:21 NASB).

Following is a helpful holistic definition to help understand our 'Preaching the Gospel as a way of life.' It was presented by the theologian Benjamin B. Warfield. He saw the Kingdom of God as made-up individual parts, which were divinely to function under God's sovereign rule. It looks like this, it is,

"God's people in God's place under God's rule living God's way."<sup>16</sup>

All of this does not mean that we will always see eye to eye on everything as God's people. We will have our differing opinions, ideas, ways of doing things. We may hold to these opinions and ideas strongly, but it should not be at the expense of loving one another as Christ has loved us. The beauty of the Church is that it is multifaceted, holding differing perspectives, cultural ideas, but despite this, there is still only one church. In our 'Preaching the Gospel as a way of life', we need to keep an eye on what Jesus meant when He gave this new commandment. He also highlighted our Kingdom of God indicator, maker, or branding of real love when He said this. The world around us is watching us as followers of Jesus Christ to determine if we are the genuine article or a counterfeit. That is why He said,

<sup>34</sup> "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another <sup>35</sup> **by his** all people will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35 NASB).

He said, "by this," not by our big building, great teaching, or how many people attend. Our branding is "love one another." That is, as we are to be,

'Continually seeking the highest good of another person, regardless of whether they respond or repay this love or not.'

It is this that is the test of our genuineness or not. So if we are to 'Preaching the Gospel as a way of life', we need to be careful that we live with a sweet spirit towards each other, i.e. with a sweet-tempered attitude.

Now we all know that we are not perfect, and we can get it all wrong and get all angry, selfish, or even be downright unpleasant at times. However, this growth in maturity should not be an excuse for our choice of bad attitudes, reactions, and actions. Instead, we need to be constantly living out the Gospel as Jesus said,

<sup>34</sup> "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another <sup>35</sup> **by this** all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35 NASB)

However, some people do not care what they say and its effect on others; they just want their say. They claim it is a free world, and I can say what I want when I want and who I want to say it, and no one will stop me. If that is the case, how do we marry that with Jesus' new commandment? Winston Churchill is supposed to have said,

"Some people's idea of free speech is that they are to say what they like, but if anyone says anything back, that is an outrage."<sup>17</sup>

Remember, no one makes us angry, hostile, quarrelsome, jealous, have outbursts of anger, have selfish ambition, cause dissension, or division (Gal 5:20 NLT). We decided to use these things as a response, a weapon, or simply get our way. These attitudes and reactions are, in fact, part of the old life before we were transformed. In fact, it is counter to the 'Preaching the Gospel as a way of life.'

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<sup>16</sup> "Taken down from the Lecture on Theology given by Cole, G." (1997) Melbourne, Ridley College.

<sup>17</sup> "The Churchill Spirit—In His Own Words." <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/08/02/archives/the-churchill-spirit-in-his-own-words.html> (4th November 2021).

The lifestyle mentioned here is not part of our new Kingdom of God-life. So if we are to 'Preaching the Gospel as a way of life,' what does this look like for us? Well, not only did Jesus show us that as recorded in the Four Gospels, but they also pointed it out. He gave a counter to the old lifestyle way of reacting. That is the fruit of the Spirit. These are,

<sup>22</sup> "But the fruit (singular) of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things, there is no law" (Gal 5:22-23 NASB).

It is like this that we can love one another, even as Christ loved us, that you are also we love one another as Christ-followers. Do not always be out to win the argument because you may damage a relationship. Do not always be out to have your right to speak, act, react, or kill someone with your words. That is not 'Preaching the Gospel as a way of life.' That is not our Christ commanded trademark as His genuine article.

## Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

**Q.** What is the trademark, which God has consistently refocussed the Church on as a priority?

We need to make ongoing choices on how to live out the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. In doing this, we honour our Heavenly Father and obey Jesus' New Commandment. It is vital to understand how to live from our God-given Kingdom identity. As Christ-followers, we are to live as God's children loving each other in His ever-present Kingdom right now. It should make us more thoughtful about how we live our lives and love each other moment by moment. In light of this truth, we need to live a life of reflective love in practice.

What you have read so far has been an attempt to try to answer this question. C.S. Lewis once said on this matter,

"You are told to love your neighbour as yourself. How do you love yourself? When I look into my own mind, I find that I do not love myself by thinking myself a dear old chap or having affectionate feelings. I do not think that I love myself because I am particularly good, but just because I am myself and quite apart from my character. I might detest something, which I have done. Nevertheless, I do not cease to love myself. In other words, that definite distinction that Christians make between hating sin and loving the sinner is one that you have been making in your own case since you were born. You dislike what you have done, but you don't cease to love yourself. You may even think that you ought to be hanged. You may even think that you ought to go to the Police and own up and be hanged. Love is not affectionate feeling, but a steady wish for the loved person's ultimate good as far as it can be obtained."<sup>18</sup>

So, if loving one another is 'Preaching the Gospel as a way of life'; it is a choice. In the wash-up, a test of your life as to whether you are a believer or not is whether you 'love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and your neighbour as yourself' and love one another as Christ has loved us. We are to do this with love, which is selfless, vulnerable, and unconditional, but this gift of love is of divine origin. So, heading further into this year, you would do well to heed the words of John again from his letter when he states that actually, when you do this,

So, today, we need to stop and reflect on how we have been preaching this Good News by how we love one another. What will we use what we have learnt today to help live a Kingdom lifestyle. How would it be if we daily lived from this new commandment as a Kingdom perspective and lifestyle before those around us? What would happen if we recognised that we are a Kingdom

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<sup>18</sup> Lewis, C.S. *God in the Dock*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 49.

representative in our communities? What would we say to someone who the lie has deceived? What is it that stands out to us today? We need to apply this; otherwise, it is merely all academic. Then we need to respond to what the Holy Spirit has been saying to us.

In response, we need to ask through this process:

- What personal application can be found in the passages?
- What is God teaching me today?
- That is, "What is God saying to me?"

How should I respond to what is being said, or so what?

- What are you going to do about it?
- What do you need to do to respond?
- Pray and respond