



St John's Hartford

walking in truth, living in love

week 1: the God of truth and love

week 2: walking in truth ...

week 3: ... living in love

walking in truth, living in love



- Three weeks to say welcome to St John's
 1. walking in truth, living in love
 - *Exodus 32-34, John 1.14-18: the God we know in Jesus Christ is love and faithfulness, grace and truth.*
 2. walking in truth ...
 - *God as Trinitarian truth – and our faithful response.*
 3. ... living in love
 - *God is love – and loving God.*

living in love



- Are we talking about God's love or our love?
 - Yes!
- But ... "We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4.19)
 - *The gospel reveals God's grace as primary, central and infinite:*
 - "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (Jn 3.16)
 - *Our response is of the same character but a different order:*
 - "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."
(Galatians 5.6)

living in love



- So we need to examine two things:
 - *God's love: "God is love"*
 - *Our responsive love for him, and our fellow humans.*



God is love



- “God is love”
 - *“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4.8)*
- God is not *just* love:
 - *“God is true” (John 3.33)*
 - *“God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1.5)*
 - *“God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.” (John 4.24)*
- God is simple: he is always all of his attributes.

God is love



- “God is love” ...
 - *in himself:*
 - “the Father loves the Son” ... “I love the Father” (John 5.20, 14.31)
 - *in providence or common grace:*
 - “He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.” (Acts 14.17)
 - *supremely, in the gift of his Son:*
 - “For God so loved the world that he gave ...”

God is love



- God is love: Christmas and Easter (1 John 4.8-10)
 - Christmas: *“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.”* (1 John 4.9)
 - Easter: *“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”* (4.10)
 - *“and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”* (AV)
 - *“and sent his Son as the one who would turn aside his wrath, taking away our sins.”* (NIV footnote)
 - Paul too: *“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5.8)

living in love?



- God is love
 - *To be a Christian is to be “living in **God’s** love”.*
 - *But ... love truly received produces a loving response:*
 - *“We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4.19)*
 - *We are called to be “living **out** God’s love” – for him **and** for others.*
 - *This is not optional: “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.” (1 John 4.20)*
 - *Love is a necessary marker of genuine faith: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13.35)*

loving God, loving others



- Jesus, the law and love

“One of the teachers of the law came and asked [Jesus], ‘Of all the commandments, which is the most important?’

‘The most important one,’ answered Jesus, ‘is this: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” There is no commandment greater than these.’”
(Mark 12.28-31)

“the living and true God” (1 Th 1.9)



- “the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”
 - *The Lord is Yahweh – the God and Father of our Lord Jesus*
 - *There is one God, with one name – neither many gods, nor one god with many names.*
 - *We are not to “pursue spirituality” but to love the God who has revealed himself uniquely in Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth.*

“Love the Lord your God”



- with your whole self
 - *The four areas do not divide neatly.*
 - *We can pair “heart and mind”, and also “soul and strength”.*
- The heart and mind are the centre of the whole person.
 - *We use “heart” to picture the centre of emotion, but in ancient thought that is lower ...*
 - *The beloved: “my heart began to pound for him” (SS 5.4) ...*
 - *... is unfortunately more literally “my bowels were moved for him” (AV)*
 - *Likewise “I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.” (NIV) is more literally, “I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” (AV)*

“Love the Lord your God”



- *In Scripture heart and mind are often linked:*
 - *They are the centre of our disobedience ...*
 - *“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind ...” (Jeremiah 17.9-10)*
 - *... and of our renewal through the gospel:*
 - *“This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” (31.33; H 10.16)*
- *In Christ, our hearts and minds are now directed upwards:*
 - *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” (Colossians 3.1-2)*

“Love the Lord your God”



- “Soul and strength”
 - *If heart and mind are the **centre** of the whole person, soul and strength are the **commitment** of the whole person.*
 - “Soul” is a synonym for “life”
 - “Strength” is our ambition, effort and goal:
 - “... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” (Heb 12.1)
 - “whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him ... Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart [lit. soul], as working for the Lord, not for men ...” (Col. 3:17,23)

“Love your neighbour as yourself”



- “Who is my neighbour?”
 - *“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho ...” (Lk 10.29-37)*
 - *Jesus’ famous parable teaches us that my neighbour is anyone the Lord puts in my path who I am able to help.*
- “Whoever loves God must also love his brother.” (1 Jn 4:21)
 - *Neighbours are all people; brothers are fellow Christians.*
 - *“as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” (Gal. 6.10)*
 - *“love one another” (Rom 12.10, 1 Pet 1.22, John 13.35)*

“Love your neighbour as yourself”



- Leviticus 19.18 in context: the need for grace
 - *“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD.”*
 - *Loving our neighbours means forgiving their sins:*
 - *“when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” (Mk 11.25)*
 - *“Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Col. 3.13)*
 - *Our neighbours even includes our enemies:*
 - *“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you.” (Luke 6.27-8)*



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