

# A New Commandment

## Marmite

### Quick poll

Who loves Marmite?

Who hates Marmite?

And who is indifferent?

### Love it or hate it

### Culture

we have learned to avoid to express hate

We are allowed to express our love for things, but we are almost not allowed to say that we hate things - except Marmite, perhaps

As that does not hurt anyone

Hate speech - especially of people is out of order

Just this week we had an outcry of some of the language that was used in the Brexit debate

And we have seen an increase in violence

So talking hate can quickly boil over acting hate

## 1 John: love and hate

### John does not shy away from the word "hate"

And he contrasts it very much with love

He is very black and white

Like Marmite, you either love your brother/sister or you hate them

He equals love with living in the light

and hate with living in darkness

### But love and hate in this passage go together with brother and sister

John is concerned with the community of Christians = Church

If we love Christ, we have to love each other

## An old/new commandment?

### This is not new! (v7)

Already in the Old Testament God's message has been

Love God above everything

Love each other as yourself

Not new at all!

And this is what the community who John writes to has heard from the beginning

### Yet it is new! (v8)

What is new then! if the message is the same?

The truth of the message (to love God and each other)

Is seen in Jesus

And is seen in us

Because of the coming of Jesus and the darkness is being replaced in us by the true light!

### Jesus makes it possible

John realises that not everything is light

But that with the coming of Jesus the darkness is driven away and the light is winning

## Quick Check

### Are you in the light of Jesus?

i.e. have you accepted not only Jesus as your saviour

But are you living your life according to his teaching?

Then: you love your brothers and sisters

### However: if you do not love your brothers or sisters...

John: you are in the darkness

You did not get it

Gospel of John: By its fruit you will recognise the tree

### Oops - that is strong...

### And John is black and white / love or hate

You either love or hate

There is no middle way

## Why no middle way?

### Difference between emotion and attitude

Love/hate as an emotion

Can you control your emotions?

Is that just not a sort of biological thing?

Love/hate as a decision

Yes, you can control your emotions, if you have decided that you love someone, that influences your emotions

and your actions

Love is not a feeling, but an act of your will

and so is not loving

John is black and white as he knows this is a decision we have to take

We love each other - because we love Jesus and Jesus loves us

We may not like each other (feeling or emotion), but we can still decide to love each other

This is what John calls us to do

This is what Jesus calls us to do

## Christian community in 1C Syria

### Jews

### Greeks

### Romans

### Rich people

### Poor people

### Mature Christians

### Baby Christians

there were many factions and many differences and many theologies, and interpretations of who Jesus is and how we have to live as Christians and many arguments and many fights...

John: If you are in the light you love your brothers and sisters

If you do not you are not in the light

You did not get what Jesus gives!

## Christian community in 21C

English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Turkey, Koreans, Chinese, or yes and Dutch

Different interpretations of what it means to be a Christian

Do we all really agree on what is right and what is wrong?

### Political differences

Conservative, Labour, Libdems, or others

Brexiters or remainers, deal or no deal

Jesus calls us to love each other as a sign that he is in us and that we walk in the light

### He never said that it would be easy

it is much easier to love from a distance

Iran Karamazov: "I could never understand how one can love one's neighbours. It's just one's neighbours, to my mind, that one can't love, though one might love at a distance... One can love one's neighbours in the abstract, or even at a distance, but at close quarters it is almost impossible

<sup>^</sup> Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoevsky

## Jesus and the Holy Spirit are in us

If we have decided to follow Jesus

He gives us his Spirit

And we learn and decide to love each other

## But what then if it goes wrong and we have a disagreement?

→ Matthew 18:15-17

15 'If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

### 1. Talk to the person who wronged, offended or hurt you

Calmly...

Explain the situation

Let the other explain their side

if in agreement: forgive each other

### 2. If still in disagreement, bring in some others to help you

Explain to the others as well beforehand

Are you in the right?

Do the others feel the same?

If still necessary, speak to the person again, but with your witnesses (do not gang up on the person).

Maybe the other would also like to have some help too

### 3. Only if not resolved then go to the elders... and they will mediate

I believe most of the time our disagreements can be solved in stage 1 - by talking to each other

Understanding each others points of view, situations and circumstances

Allowing the other person to say that they are sorry

### Difficult

Not the British way

Counter cultural

But I believe God's way

## Loving one another means investing in each others relationships

learning who the other is

Speaking of what hurts us so that the other can adjust

And the other way around as well

However, if we ignore situations like this - then the problem grows

But if we work through our disagreements and conflicts

We grow stronger and a congregation

We learn to love each other deeper

And we witness that we are who walk in the light

Not by avoiding conflict, but by addressing conflict

## Response?