

“When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matt. 22: 34 - 40

Dear Friends,

The words above are taken from the Gospel reading in the Revised Common Lectionary for this coming Sunday. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind (some versions add ‘and strength,’)” and, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” Everything else depends on these Jesus tells us. Everything!

I wonder, how are you finding being able to love God with your whole being and to love your neighbour as yourself during this time of ever greater restriction, isolation, and fear? It’s a massive challenge for us. It’s hard enough just to keep the show on the road, to put one step in front of the other and keep going. Almost everywhere I look I see people drained of energy, joy and hope and I recognise my reflection in their faces (or more usually these days, in their computer screens!)

But while much has changed in our lives and in our world, God has not changed. God still pours himself out in love for this world. That is God’s mission – to give himself for us and all our fellow human beings. And it is a mission that God calls us to participate in no matter what our context. Love for God is demonstrated through love for others.

Much of our world, and certainly media, is dominated by divisive voices, at present. But hope springs eternal and can be found in the most unlikely of places. If you know me well, you will know that not only am I a Leicester City fan, but I am also a Bon Jovi fan. Just in case you don’t know who they are (!!!), they are one of the most successful rock bands of the last 40 years. I had the pleasure of seeing them live at Milton Keynes bowl in 1996 and have been hooked ever since. The lead singer, Jon Bon Jovi, has spent the last 6 months writing new songs for a new album with a social justice slant to it, and serving meals in the restaurants that are owned by his foundation, to those who cannot afford a proper meal. I want to share with you the lyrics of one of his new songs. You may even have heard it on the radio. It’s called, “Do what you can.”

*Tonight they're shutting down the borders
And they boarded up the schools
Small towns are rollin' up their sidewalks
One less paycheck comin' through
I know you're feelin' kinda nervous
We're all a little bit confused
Nothing's the same, this ain't a game
We gotta make it through*

As we wave outside the window

*Older loved ones stay inside
Moms and babies blowin' kisses
May be saving someone's life
They had to cancel graduation
It ain't fair to Skype the prom
Our kids sit home in isolation
TV news is always on*

*When you can't do what you do
You do what you can
This ain't my prayer, it's just a thought I'm wanting to send
'Round here, we bend but don't break
Down here, we all understand
When you can't do what you do
You do what you can*

*The chicken farm from Arkansas bought workers PPE
Not before five hundred more had succumbed to this disease
Honest men and honest women workin' for an honest wage
I got a hundred point one fever, and we still got bills to pay*

*When you can't do what you do
You do what you can
This ain't my prayer, it's just a thought I'm wanting to send
'Round here, we bend but don't break
Down here, we all understand
When you can't do what you do
You do what you can*

*They built a hospital on East Meadow in Central Park last night
Doctors, nurses, truckers, grocery store clerks manning the front lines
I saw a Red Cross on the Hudson
They turned off the Broadway lights
Another ambulance screams by
There by the grace of God go I*

*Although I'll keep my social distance
What this world needs is a hug
Until we find the vaccination
There's no substitute for love
So love yourself and love your family
Love your neighbour and your friend
Ain't it time we loved a stranger?
They're just a friend you ain't met yet*

Every Blessing,

Rev Tim