

On Ash Wednesday we began thinking about the whole issue of change that we might want to see in ourselves.

Desire to change arises out of a sense of dissatisfaction with ourselves – overweight - we go on a diet. Out of condition – we go on a fitness routine.

Discipline only part of Lent – also a penitential season – designed to encourage us to think about repentance

Repentance is a change in direction – so alongside the discipline, the giving up, the laying aside – there is also a process of building up.

We expect to see results. The diet, the fitness routine – we look for signs that this is working – we look for fruits of our discipline.

Paul uses the word fruits in his letter to the Galatians when he speaks of fruits of the Spirit

READ GALATIANS PASSAGE

I set that alongside the teaching of the Revised Catechism:

Holy Spirit enables me to become more like Jesus

So we look for these fruits of the Spirit as they are to be found in Jesus and in God himself.

Tonight focus on LOVE

English language has only one word that covers the whole range of love from the physical, the friendship, the self giving, spiritual aspects of love.

Christian love, be it the spiritual or indeed the physical or the friendship must always have within it the self giving, self sacrificing love of God..

Love is a word that occurs right through the Bible.

In the Old Testament , one of the most common of usages is that of ‘the unfailing mercy of God’

Scriptures described as God's love letter to mankind – a story of love that continues in the face of all setbacks.

Man turns his back of god but God will not, cannot turn his back on man.

Ultimate expression of love is Jesus on the Cross. It is what I like to call Calvary love – love at full stretch – image of child asking how much we love them – do you love me this much

God in Christ is saying I love you this much – arms stretched out, nailed to the Cross – love at full stretch

This is the starting point for my response of love

READ EPHESIANS PASSAGE

This is where the teaching of the work of the Holy Spirit comes in
Holy Spirit enables me to become more like Jesus

Jesus love is a healing, reconciling, redeeming love - our lives should show the same

Love relational - not conditional or manipulative – if you loved me etc

Love in Jesus very opposite of conditional – makes the first step

‘While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us’.

His love precedes my repentance, my response. God has done his part – now up to me to respond

I am called to be an initiator in reconciliation, in forgiveness – how can we begin to make this happen?

Love that knows no boudaries – love not just our neighbour but also our enemy – example of Gordon Wilson

Love that does not count the cost - cost of the cross in words ‘ My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?’

In the extent of God’s love, love at full stretch I recognise the poverty of my response.

Not a simple imitation, something done in my own strength and my own will power.

Letting Jesus live in and through me

As Paul wrote to the Galatians:

I have been crucified with Christ; ²⁰ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Holy Spirit enables me to become more like Jesus

What are the obstacles to God’s love?