Sermon: **This is what I command you: love one another** (John 15.17)

Write on paper in groups those from whom you have received love – not just the obvious. Remove any that are in common between groups, and the group with most remaining wins a bag of sugar-free sweets!

What motivated these people to love us? Was it a sense of duty? What they would get out of it? What others would think if they did not? No, this love is focussed purely on the one loved – you!

Why should God’s love be any different? Did Jesus show love from duty, a return, or because others would think badly of him otherwise? No, he loved because he could do no other.

Which makes a *command* to love seem a little odd! TEXT.

Think of the Ten Commandments – if we truly love someone would we break any of them?

I guess they are saying that they are a way of realising when you have stopped loving.

Also with God’s love within us, they are promises not warnings!

TEXT. We are used to love meaning emotional warmth, and better than just liking.

Retranslate our reading: **I like you just as the Father likes me; stay likeable. If you obey my commands you will be likeable, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain liked by him… My commandment is this: like one another, just as I like you. A person shows how greatly she likes her friends by giving her life for them – and you are my friends, if you do what I command… This is what I command you: like each other.**

This soundsodd!!! But in the Bible love is not an emotion, but an act of will, even if you can’t help it.

We know all mothers do not all love their children, at least not in the healthiest way. But when they do it is not because they are told to, but because they can’t help it. That’s why Sharon is with Ross right now.

TEXT. That same quality of love is meant to be the hallmark of the Christian community. The reality that it is not always so does not negate this.

Sam in ‘Lord Of The Rings’ loves Frodo to the point of great suffering and even abuse.

At one point he says, ***“There’s some good in this world, and it’s worth fighting for”.***

What did he mean by this? That love is so strong that it endures pain, hardship & loss to reach its aim. What is our aim? The Kingdom of God in all life and in every life. This means both God’s presence acknowledged and made real through love. This can only occur as we receive God’s love deep within.

Perhaps Jesus should have said: This is what I command: be loved by God.