

**A sermon preached at St. Michael & All Angels Church, Sandhurst on 9th May
2021 at 9:30 –Parish Communion (Informal) by Emma Hodge**

Readings; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17

Let's pray

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts and meditations of all our hearts
be always acceptable in your sight O Lord our strength and our redeemer
Amen

What do these two pictures have in common?

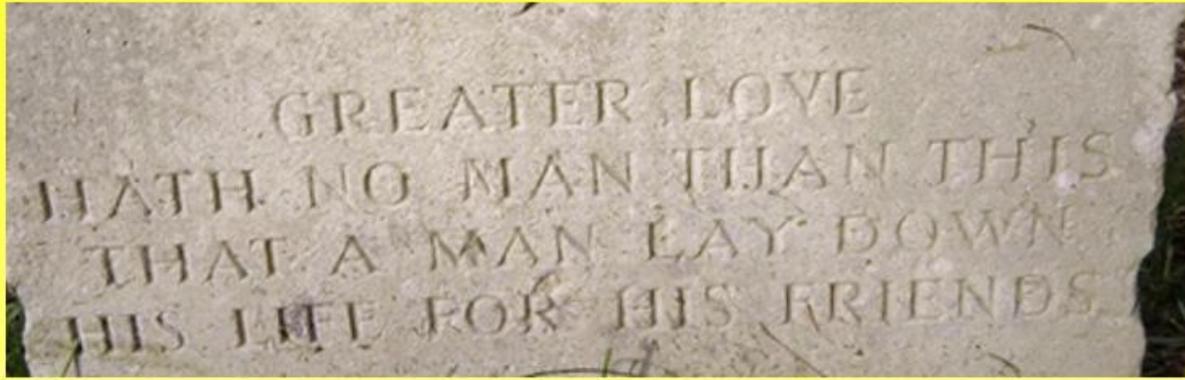
What do these two pictures have in common?



A picture of our east window, and a picture of one of our war graves from the
First World War, Arthur Muggeridge?

I'll give you a moment to think about it

OK another clue



The wording that is on the bottom of Arthur's grave, wording that is frequently found on war graves,

OK your last clue

Faith Conquers the World

5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ^[a] has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. **2** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. **3** For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, **4** for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. **5** Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Testimony concerning the Son of God

6 This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. **10** If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. **11** I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. **12** My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. **14** You are my friends if you do what I command. **15** I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. **17** This is my command: Love each other.

(Sound clip – "All you need is Love" by the Beatles)

Well I hope you have it now, Love.

The word love appears 9 times in our gospel reading and 5 times in our New Testament reading and is a key component of our theme,

If you were in church last week, you would have heard John White's sermon on the preceding verses to our New Testament reading, which outlined an aspect of the topic which can be summarised in three words "God is Love".

Our New Testament passage starts with a statement that on first glance is simple but, as so much of John's writings, contains so much more

If we believe that Jesus is the Son of God then if we love God the Father, we also love God the Son, Jesus Christ.

It is at the heart of Christianity, as Christians we can't love God the Father if we don't love God the Son and likewise, we can't love God the Son if we don't love God the Father.

I'll come back to our New Testament reading in a moment but if we go to our Gospel reading, we notice that it starts on the same theme

Jesus is saying God the Father has loved Him and Jesus loves us. However, here comes a challenge, we need to remain in God's love.

We are told, both by the next verse, and the passage from 1 John, that we show love for God (both the father and the son) by carrying out God's commandments. This is how we remain in God's love

Jesus then goes on to give us a new commandment. To Love one another as he has loved us.

The last part, **as he has loved us**, can not be overlooked. Jesus knew that he was in the world to save us, to enable us to have eternal life and that meant dying for us, to pay that ultimate price, that price that is depicted in our East Window, to die on a cross.

All so that we, can have eternal life. Earlier in John's Gospel we are told "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, For god did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him.¹

Jesus knew that loving us meant that he would have to die and be raised to life on Easter Day.

Jesus then gives us the quote, the quote that is found on war graves "Greater love have no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends²"

The inscription on war graves is there for numerous reasons, and those will vary depending on the service personnel remembered, there are certainly accounts of how the person died while saving others, but this is not the time or the place to go into them and we are, thankfully, rarely going to be called to

¹ John 3:16-17

² John 15:13

literally lay down our lives for one friends. But this is exactly what Jesus did for us,

In the next verse of our gospel reading, Jesus clarifies the relationship that he has with us, it is not one of servant, where you have to obey and do what you are told, and instead it is one with friendship.

If you think about your own friendships, these relationships grow and develop over time, the more time you put into the friendship the more you learn about each other. This is why, earlier in the chapter we are told to remain with God and Jesus uses the analogy of the vine and the branches, the branch needs the vine to survive, so we need God to survive and flourish.

Jesus tells us in our gospel passage to remain in his love by keeping his commandments and he gives us a new one to love one another as he has loved us.

There is no qualification about who we need to love, it is clear, other people,

It doesn't say that we only love the people who look and think like us,

It doesn't say that Jesus loves us if we meet some criteria

We need to love others
Jesus loves all of us

Our society has seen in recent years, several campaigns highlighting prejudice and injustice.

Last year, saw the Black Lives Matter campaign,

Other groups who have cried out at injustices in society, are women, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people (often known by the acronym LGBT+)

We need to be clear,

Jesus loves each of them just the same as he loves us

We need to love them, just as he loved us, to the extent that we stand with them, and share in their pain, their injustice.

Over the course of the pandemic, members of this church have been calling other members, checking in, seeing how they are and spending time listening and speaking to them. This is what Agapaō love can look like

But it is not the only way,

Over the course of the pandemic, Easter and Christmas envelopes were made up and delivered, they contained reflections, gifts, pastoral letters, all of which showing that we as a church cared for members of our community, Easter envelopes going to members of our church while Christmas envelopes going to some church members and other members of our community. We had to change because of the pandemic, but it built on something that had happened the previous year, a Christmas meal, for the days in between Christmas and New Year when those on their own were invited for a meal together in our centre, and this meant bringing them in if transport was an issue, All of this showing our Agapaō love in action as a church community,

But it shouldn't be limited to what we do as a community and as a society, instead it needs to be built on what we do as individuals.

For some, this is as simple as buying some extra groceries and donating them to the foodbank,

Or it could be as simple as making sure a neighbour, friend, or work colleague is OK, it doesn't have to be an elderly person.

Tomorrow marks the start of Mental Health Awareness week, one of the lasting effects of the pandemic is the effect that it has had on people's mental health, as they have been stripped of their normal support structures. Mental health affects about 1 in 4 people each year³ but by showing Agapē love, it shows people that they are not alone, that someone cares and by loving others that helps our mental health⁴

This is how we can show the commandment that Jesus gave us in the passage To love one another as Jesus has loved us and as our New Testament reading reminds us, God's commandments are not burdensome, they are something we can all do.

While I'm not saying that the Beatles were theologians, they were correct when they sung "all you need is love"

All you need is the Selfless Agape kind of Love, to show others that you love and care for them just as Jesus loves each one of us.

How will you love one another?

(Sound clip – "All you need is Love" by the Beatles)

³ <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/statistics-and-facts-about-mental-health/how-common-are-mental-health-problems/>

⁴ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-mental-health>