



**21 May 2017**

**6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter**

**Revd Tony Gardiner**

*If you love me, you will keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father and he will send you another Counsellor to be with you for ever. (John 14:1)*

In the musical comedy "My Fair Lady", there is a lively little chorus that starts out, "Words, words, words, I'm just sick of words!" And then the female vocalist sings, "Don't talk of stars burning above; if you're in love, show me." When Eliza Doolittle sang that song, I am sure she wasn't thinking of our Gospel reading for today. But when I read the Gospel the words of that song came to my mind and I thought they were appropriate for Jesus tells his disciples, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

What does it mean to love Jesus? You may remember some years ago a popular sticker that appeared on the rear window of a car, "Honk, if you love Jesus." We could respond to that sticker and honk when we see it, but that would not prove our love for the Lord. That's just too easy. Jesus never put much stock in declarations of devotion. Instead he was always linking love to action. He cared very little for words without action.

Please don't misunderstand me. I am not suggesting it is meaningless and shallow for husbands and wives to say to each other, 'I love you'. Those three little words when spoke with sincerity, can change the colour of an entire day. All of us should probably say them more often. I am simply saying that actions speak louder than words. It is an insult to tell someone we love them unless we show that love in the things we do. This is especially true in matters of religion. It means absolutely nothing for you or me to speak of our love for the Lord unless we translate those words into deeds.

A husband can show his love for his wife by sending her flowers or giving her a box of chocolates or taking her out for a meal or decorating the kitchen or a number of other thoughtful ways. Parents can show their love for their children by spending time with them. Children can show their love for their parents by getting along with their brothers and sisters, helping with household chores, and keeping their bedrooms tidy. How can we show our love for the Lord? Jesus himself tells us how when he says, "Keep my commandments." We can start with the ten commandments, but we can't stop there. The Pharisees took great pride in obeying those ancient laws, yet they made no pretence of loving Jesus. They, in fact, hated him and did everything they could to discredit him. So if we show our love for the Lord by obeying his commandments, we must go beyond the moral laws of the Old Testament.

We have seen that we can show our love for our Lord by loving one another. What else can we do? What have we got that he needs now? If we had lived in his day there were several things we could have done to him personally to show our love. If we had been the innkeeper in Bethlehem, we could have made room for his mother and given him a decent place in which to be born. If we had been the Samaritan woman by Jacob's Well, we could have given him a drink of water. If we had been the boy with the barley loaves and fish, we could have given him the family's lunch so that he could use it to feed the hungry crowd. If we had been that landlord in Jerusalem we could have loaned him that upper room that they might eat the Passover with his disciples. If we had been Simon of Cyrene, we could have carried his cross. If we had been Joseph of Arimathea, we could have given him our tomb. These were the things Jesus needed and some of these needs were met by some thoughtful people.

Jesus is no longer with us in his bodily presence. He needs none of those things now. So what can we do for him? We can give him our heart and time in prayer and we can love our neighbour. Giving our hearts to Jesus may involve reorganising our loves. We need to make time in our busy schedule to be with Jesus in prayer, by our presence together in the Eucharist.

By loving our neighbour, opportunities abound on every side for showing Jesus that we love him. We don't have to talk about it. In fact, it would probably be better if we didn't talk about it at all. Just let us find people who are hungry and feed them. Find people who are lonely and befriend them. It may be an

elderly person who can no longer get out and about. Find people in sorrow and let them know we care. Find people who are discouraged and share with them a little of our courage.

That's what it means to love Jesus, being prayerful, caring and thoughtful people. Unless we translate our love for him in down-to-earth, practical things like we have just mentioned, we can be certain that we don't love the Lord. I have no doubt that our Lord would agree with Eliza Doolittle when she sang, "Words, words, words, I'm just sick of words. If you're in love, show me."