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Briefing 51: Tuesday 16th February, 2021.

Dear friends,

New City Catechism Question 7: What does the Law of God require?

Question 6 asked how we glorify God, and the answer included enjoying and loving God, and obeying his will, commands and law. And of course, that begs the question: what does God's law require? The answer is both surprising and deeply challenging. Here's the full catechism version:

***The Law of God requires personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience;
that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbour as ourselves.
What God forbids should never be done and what God commands should always be done.***

When I was a teenager, I moved from a school which had no uniform code, and which gave all its pupils immense freedom at break times, to a school with a rigid uniform and behaviour policy. It took a while to get used to it!

But coming to God and committing ourselves to him is far more daunting, for the Law of God requires personal, perfect and perpetual obedience in all areas of our lives. That's the command. That's the standard. And that shouldn't surprise us. After all, God is holy and righteous in all his ways, so of course he's going to want his children to grow in the family likeness, and to live in a way that reflects his character and life.

On our own, and by our own efforts, we cannot live up to this. But we are not on our own. When we come to Jesus in repentance and faith, the Holy Spirit comes and lives in our hearts and gives us both the desire to obey God's commands and the ability to do so. Neither of those things happen completely the moment we turn to Jesus. It's a gradual process by which our wills are brought in line with God's will, so that we want to do what he wants us to do. And as our wills are changed, so the Spirit gives us the strength to live the life that God calls us to live: to resist temptation and to do what is right, so that over time our lives and characters are shaped more into the likeness of Jesus. So don't be daunted by the standards. Remember that God is patient with us, he forgives us when we fall, and as we continue to live out our Christian lives, our gracious Heavenly Father gives us the strength to obey.

But if that's the challenge, the surprise here is that our obedience to God needs to be accompanied by love of God. The Law of God requires that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbour as ourselves. We are required to love.

I know that sounds a little strange. How can you command someone to love? Shouldn't love always be given freely? That's exactly the point. Our obedience to God needs to be motivated by our love for him, not by a desire to put him in our debt so he will answer our prayers, nor by our fear of his wrath and anger should we fail. Those can be powerful motivating factors, but they are not enough. They don't do justice to the identity of God, nor are they strong enough to keep us walking the path of obedience when life gets tough. Only a desire to please God above all things will do that. Only love for God will do that.

But once again, God made the first move. God showed his love for his Old Testament people by rescuing them from slavery in Egypt – and only then did he give them his Law to teach them how they might remain in fellowship with him and enjoy the Promised Land. And it was while we were away from him, rejecting him, rebelling against him, that God demonstrated his love for us, because it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us.

And the more we grow in appreciation of what God has done for us, the more we grasp his greatness, his majesty, his might, his glory, his patience, his beauty, his power, his creativity, his holiness, his compassion, his kindness and his love, the more we will love him for who he is and for what he has done for us, and the more our obedience to him becomes both our greatest desire and our greatest joy.

Yours in Christ,

Dave

IMPORTANT STUFF – DON'T JUST GLANCE- TAKE IT ALL IN!

THE **GOOD NEWS ON-LINE CORNHILL**

MISSION: the programme is up and running now for our on-line mission taking place all this week.

Don't forget to tune in to the interviews and come along to the events yourself. I'm sure you'll find them encouraging.

But most of all- keep inviting your friends and family to come along with you... let's be tellers of good news!

The church website and our Facebook page have all the information, and links to the women's event on Thursday evening, the quiz on Friday night and the men's breakfast on Saturday morning can be obtained by emailing enquiries@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk

GOOD NEWS!

It's been a bleak year.

So much has changed.

So much is uncertain.

But there is GOOD NEWS.

Right now.

Today.

For you.

In Jesus Christ.

We'd love to tell you more...

So why not tune-in to our week of GOOD NEWS EVENTS

And hear the GOOD NEWS for yourself.

Oh, and here's more good news ...

Everything is free!

Monday 15th-Sunday 21st February

Every day: Good News Treasure Hunt for kids in the St Nicholas Church Yard. (Instructions + cards in the Lych Gate)

Lunchtimes at 1pm Tuesday-Friday: Interviews + discussions on Facebook Live. People telling their stories and explaining how Jesus is good news even in times of uncertainty, suffering, chaos and death.

Thursday evening 7:30pm: Women's event. Good news for body, mind and soul: An evening of interviews, chat, discussion, stories and practical talks. On Zoom. Contact us for a link.

Friday evening 7:30pm: Good News Quiz.

Some light-hearted quizzing fun with a message of good news in the middle. On Zoom. Contact us for a link.

Saturday morning 8:30am: Men's Virtual Breakfast: AI- the Hope or Doom of Mankind? Bring your own coffee and breakfast and hear from an expert in AI research. On Zoom. Contact us for a link.

Sunday morning at 9:30am: Join us live from St Nicholas Church (in person or on YouTube) to hear how Jesus is the Good News we truly need to hear.

St Nicholas Church Stevenage. Email enquiries@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk or Tel 01438 213587

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COME AND PRAY TOGETHER! THIS WEEK we are holding extra prayer gatherings on line from 7:30am to 8am. Why not put the time aside and pray for the events of our Mission Week? Contact Dave for the Zoom link.

If you want to pray in church, St Nicholas will be open for private prayer for 3 sessions a week: Tuesdays from 2 – 4pm, Wednesdays 12 noon – 2pm, and Thursdays 10am – 12 noon. Why not go along and pray there?

You might also want to get together with a friend, on a walk or over the phone, and pray with them. But however we do it; let's make time to pray this week. Let us earnestly seek God and ask that he might move by his Holy Spirit and bring people to him.

ASH WEDNESDAY: Lent begins this week, but sadly we will not be holding a special Ash Wednesday service. However, from 9am Wednesday morning there will be a short, pre-recorded service available on our YouTube channel. You can find that here: [\(2\) St Nicholas Church Stevenage - YouTube](#)

LENT COURSE: Gentle and Lowly... Although there are plenty of copies of the study guide left, we've now sold out of the hardback books. However, they are available online from a variety of booksellers including www.10ofthose.com. If you would like to join home group to discuss the material, please do speak with me or one of the home group leaders.

CHILDREN'S WORK ON SUNDAYS: Under tier 4 and 5, we are unable to hold separate children's work in church. However, activity packs will be available to tie in with the talk and the question from the New City Catechism, so do bring your children along. We love to see them and they are a treasured part of our family. Our children's work will recommence once schools reopen.

DEANERY SYNOD: Deanery Synod meets via Zoom on Thursday night this week. The first part of the meeting will include a look at the Church of England's *Living in Love and Faith* resources, followed by some help in using social media effectively. This part of the meeting is open to all, so if you're not going to the women's Good News event on Thursday night and would like to come along, please email Dave for a link.