

SERMON FOR DISCUSSION: The difference between compassion and love

Matthew 20 v1-16

Who has been a leader of his people for longer than our Queen and has won a Nobel Peace Prize and is immensely popular world-wide?

His first name is Tenzin and he was born in a remote stable on 6th July 1935. Any answers?

-The **Dali Lama**, Tenzin Gyatso. His Holiness, 14th D.L. since 1950. Leader of Tibet. Leader in Exile since China annexed Tibet in 1959.

AND WHY do I mention this?

Answer: because on 14th September, just two weeks ago, in Oxford, he opened **THE DALI LAMA CENTRE FOR COMPASSION**.

A major initiative. Not many can fund a new Oxford College.

The English dictionary says 'compassion' is

"A feeling of deep sympathy for another in difficulty, with a desire to alleviate suffering"

The New Testament goes a bit further and uses 5 different words meaning "to suffer with" "to be deeply moved from within" and "to have pity or mercy"

Now, why a new 'Centre for Compassion'?

The Dali Lama says he wants "**to completely re-shape the field of ethics**". It is an ambitious goal. And he wants to re-shape because he says: "different religions cannot agree about ethical issues but the world urgently needs **ethics which can apply to everyone no matter what their beliefs**".

Here is a direct quote:

"There is no need to talk about God, no need to talk about Buddha. We need only to recognise that, just as I myself wish to be happy and not to suffer, so do others. THIS IS THE BASIS OF COMPASSION."

OH DEAR!

The Dali Lama's ethic is **clearly individualistic**.

(2)

It's all about the individual person being happy and avoiding suffering.

Although this is 2015, is this really any different from what the hippies of 50 years ago wanted? They thought that if we all had loving feelings the problems of the world would go away.

"All you need is love" sang the Beatles 50 years ago.

But it wasn't Christian love, it was loving feelings.

The truth is: Yes, Christians are to be compassionate but **Christian LOVE is bigger and better than compassion**. Certainly, the compassion the Dalai Lama talks about.

JESUS taught that love can be summed up as the love of God and the love of one's neighbour.

ST PAUL taught that love is greater than religion (Jew or Greek), greater than gender (Male or Female) and greater than social status (Slave or Free).

AND SO WE SEE that love is not a benign inner feeling towards others but is a force which shapes society. **Would Jesus really have been put to death for proclaiming an inoffensive message**, "to love one another"?

NO!

-He was put to death because he proclaimed A NEW KINGDOM in which He is King. A kingdom that is entered by faith and is built by an **expansive vision of love-in-action** which challenges the status quo and seeks to build a society that is just and righteous and where injustice is challenged.

A love which seeks to create loving and just **laws**; -So rich and poor alike are fairly treated.

A love which seeks to create loving and just **economics**; -So there are not growing inequalities of wealth. Remember our Bible Reading about the Workers in the Vineyard, Matthew 20, where all paid equally because their needs were equal.

(3)

A love which seeks to create loving and just **social systems**; -So the sick, and weak and vulnerable are fairly treated.

THIS is much more than just compassion. This is the kingdom of GOD.
This is an ethic which finds its roots in faith in God.

This is THE OPPOSITE of the Dali Lama's "*There is no need to talk of God*"

Now, if the opening of the Dali Lama Centre for Compassion triggers a debate and discussion about compassion it can only be a good thing
but let us be clear:

CHRISTIANS have a distinctive and powerful contribution to make.

Ponder for yourselves the difference between compassion and love.

Preached by Martin Tanner in St Mary's
at 10.00am on Thursday 1st October 2015
and based on an idea in the Church Times