

daily basis. And it seems that by loving our neighbours as ourselves, we are also loving God. The two commandments are linked. Jesus clearly had a broad understanding of who exactly the neighbour is; for him it included people in need, strangers and even enemies. It simply does not make sense to say you love God and are following Jesus, and not to love and live for others.

Application

There is a clear challenge here for the priorities in our individual lives, and indeed in our churches. Though false gods and idolatry may seem a thing of the past, let us reflect on how we spend our resources and our time. This will reveal where we place our faith. Perhaps we idolise things other than God – money, personal property, celebrities. It is easy for our faith to wither amidst selfishness and materialism. This is why the first reading too, from Deuteronomy, asks us to hold tight to loving God.

What do our bank balances and diaries reveal? Do we spend our time and money on life-giving things for ourselves, or for others? Do we worship the living God with living works – such as reaching out to the homeless, or lobbying for justice – or are our hearts set on things that are merely material or even destructive? These are just a few of the barometers by which our false gods are revealed, and clearly the temptation to idolatry is just as strong now as it was at the time of Jesus. We will only be able to love as Jesus loves if we are free from idols.

We are also called as a church community to reflect upon our priorities. How do we communicate our church's priorities to members and to the surrounding community? How far do we regard those suffering in other parts of the world as our neighbours – in need of more than occasional charity? If we feel we have a relationship with the whole of humanity, then work for global justice and peace may become a more significant part of church outreach.