Sermon: **To all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity** (Colossians 3.14)

\* “I have this belief that when you are born you are kinda perfect. You get older & you get dumb. So that’s why I like to give them the power.” From a TV show spoken by a kindergarten teacher.

A common sentiment, but fundamentally wrong. Babies are basically selfish – and need to be! Explain.

Jesus appears not to help (**unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven** Matthew 18.3), though there Jesus refers to humility.

We can see what happens to adults who never change their innate selfishness - dictating education, politics, church & society; it is bad for them and everyone else. So how do we deal with that innate selfishness?

*[1] One way is through obedience* (Col 3.20)

Col 3.18-21 –awkward words. To say we must see the cultural context sounds like wriggling and thus avoiding what God is saying. Thus some churches will insist on the letter of Col 3.18-21.

The trouble is that ‘submission to the one with power’ often leads to people like Harvey Weinstein, Bill Cosby, Jimmy Savile, Rolf Harris, as well as child abuse, domestic violence, etc.
But does this mean we should avoid obedience, whether in marriages, or in bringing up children?

NB the cultural context of the Roman *paterfamilias* –who had ultimate & complete power.

*Paul is not arguing against his culture but Christianising it* – yes it is right to obey, but husbands have responsibilities too. Paul’s words were bold in his day – what would be bold in ours?

*[2] Another way is via indulgence*, which often masquerades as love. “I give them everything I did not have growing up”. This is a typical way in our culture.

Confusion between love and indulgence; between ‘their own way’ and ‘the right way’.

* Fires – do you let them find out how harmful they can be the hard way, with dire consequences?
* Advert about children crayoning on walls – solution? Put on wall paint that can be cleaned!
* Sweets at supermarket - do you give in?

Col 3.21 might suggest trying to help children out of their selfishness is wrong – it would irritate them.

So give them the power (as above\*). Obnoxious! It must be overcome, not indulged in. But how?

 *[3] Love is the best way*

TEXT. Love sums up a general positive and caring attitude (**you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another** Col 3.12f) This is not weak, or indulgent, but powerful and transforming.

What is love? It is an ability to see life from another’s view, and act on that view, for the sake of that other.

Love = putting up fireguards, explaining the error of crayoning walls, no begging for sweets at supermarket.

This is what competent mothers (and fathers) do with children. It is what effective husbands and wives do.

It is not easy to imagine another’s view, but essential. It is this love which Christianises our culture. This is not our love, pale and fragmentary, but God’s love, strong and permanent. TEXT.