**The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength** (Mark 12.29f)

The hymn All Things Bright And Beautiful used to have a verse, now omitted:

**The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, God made them high or lowly & ordered their estate!** Why do we feel uncomfortable with this? Not too long ago this was the norm. Today is so different. TEXT, comes from the old era. ‘Lord’ = Kurios = Master. In Jesus’ day (and up till 19th Century) society had a hierarchy – all had a master.

Today in NZ society we like to be independent, self-governing people, with no master.

To have God as Master can seem uncomfortable, unnecessary, even wrong.

TEXT – quoting from Deuteronomy 6.4-6, Jews resented any overlords (Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans), but also worshipped only one god, unlike all their neighbours.

Gods would be worshipped (loved?) with folk’s hearts, souls, minds and strength.

Hearts – will; souls – emotions; minds – thinking; strength – energy.

Difference for Jews is the totality of this – all given to just one God.

This is what we are called to do. This appears positive and negative.

Positive: cannot do what we want to do. Your Master would determine whom you would marry, where you worked, your pay and conditions of work.

Negative: we do not have to make all decisions ourselves, we are not alone, there is One on our side.

It is so easy to focus on the negative, especially in the face of a ‘me’ society. We need to remember the positive, tell those stories, and so illustrate TEXT, as well as showing that the positives far outweigh the negatives. So God first!