

(PP1) The Jesus we never knew 2017 x30.

(PP2) How Jesus behaves with people, who are different from him and difficult people. 23 July_2017.

READ: JOHN 21: 1 - 19. JESUS meets seven disciples for a beach barbeque breakfast and talks to Peter.

(PP3) I don't know how many of you able to say of **MARMITE** – I'm a lover of marmite...I'm a hater of marmite. How do you respond to different events & people?

Hyperbole: intentional exaggeration to make a point: Jesus used it quite a bit.



As we seek to follow and learn from Jesus a challenge is presented to us about how we relate to people who are often different to us – indeed they share our weak and broken humanness. We are as people, (particularly living in very diverse London) meeting people who are not just different to us in terms of age, personalities and background but also different in terms of culture and practices. During the weeks that we've been thinking about this, quite a few people have spoken to me about the challenge you felt in thinking about your own behaviour towards people at work, family, neighbourhood who may be very different to you or who even behave badly so that you find it difficult to respond to their behaviour positively. It is often hard I think to fulfil Jesus' command to love neighbour as you love yourself. His command is stark – love neighbour as you love yourself (not be mildly indifferent to neighbour). It's not enough to say – I don't hate them. The command is love them and love one another AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.

Some of you found this: -

Question significant. Do we see people who are different to us and even those we find difficult in their behaviour to us and others as a “gift” – God given and an opportunity for us to grow as people and to grow in holiness? Do we thank God for them?

“Regardless, by growing in holiness we can learn to accept the inconvenient, the incongruent and the bothersome (people and events) in our life not just as necessary nuisances but as gifts.” (1)

We have considered Jesus’ response to difference and difficult behaviour amongst even his closest disciples. It must have been deeply unhelpful to Jesus that his closest friends and brothers argued even at the “last supper” about who was the greatest among them (**Luke 22: 24 fol**) and also we saw that following this they were emotionally unable to fulfil his request for their help in Gethsemane. But **he didn’t give up on them!!!** And nor must we quickly give up on those people who fail us. Yes, there are times that brothers and sisters even in the church fail us but **let’s be honest** there are numerous occasions when we fail them. (*Have I left the Way, the Truth and the Life and walked my own way?*).

Simon Peter was totally convinced that he wouldn’t fail Jesus. He obviously felt he was “the greatest” of Jesus’ followers or at least one of the most important with James and John vying for that position. There was as Jesus knew a fairly high degree of self-deception in Simon Peter as with all of us. **READ Luke 22: 31 – 34. ! Simon, Simon! Satan has...**” Simon was convinced that he wouldn’t let Jesus down – he would not behave badly (even if others did). We know that he was wrong and he came to realise that he was wrong. Following the resurrection of Jesus, he makes it plain that he wants his disciples and Peter told that he is alive (*Mark 16:7*)

After his death and resurrection, JESUS went out of his way to see his failed disciples and restore them and encourage them to go on being changed. He challenged Peter at the breakfast about the depth and reality of his love for him and commissioned him to care for the other disciples as a shepherd cares for his flock. Jesus is not rubbing Peter’s nose in his failure he is getting him to open his eyes to reality and therefore the possibility of change. (Passage read from *John 21*). Peter is obviously feeling a failure – flat and depressed in his soul he declares that he’s going fishing – returning to what he knows.

Three times JESUS asks Peter about how he feels about him. (Almost as though for every denial he is giving him the chance to realistically affirm his knowing and love of Jesus).

Using this incident what are the lessons we can learn from Jesus’ relationship with those who were different from himself and behaved badly or let him down?

- **Jesus** committed himself to pray for Peter and indeed he prayed for him in advance of his denying knowing Jesus. He was fully aware of Peter’s fears and

weaknesses of nature and personality. (Jesus is aware of my weaknesses of nature and personality and prays for me. And for you. I am not always realistic or honest about my own weaknesses. How might I become aware of these before they rear up and bite me in my spiritual Achilles heel? Prayer – also listening to God as he speaks through his Word and others I trust).

- **Jesus** spent time with the disciples – 7 of them on this occasion and ate a meal with them – recognized in the “breaking of bread” covenant – Lord’s Supper. And he also took Peter aside to speak with him one to one. He asked him, *Do you love me more than these others do?* Remember Simon had claimed he would never deny knowing Jesus and he and others constantly argue about who was the greatest in the Lord’s affection. Even following this incident, he goes on to ask what Jesus’ plans are for his friend and rival (John) for the affection of Jesus. Basically, Jesus tells him to stop being nose-y about others like John and look to his own love for Jesus and the tasks he gives him to do.
- **Jesus** asked the question about love for him 3 times until Simon Peter gave him a more realistic answer – to make Peter face up to the truth and reality about how much he loved Jesus. Peter was saddened by Jesus’ persistence but he acknowledged – *Lord you know everything and you know the reality of my love for you.* It’s only from a grasping in our mind and heart of our weakness that we really face up to how much Jesus loves us and that we are really able to CARE FOR OTHERS. Jesus charges Peter to tend the lambs and feed the sheep. Peter is to pastor – to shepherd others: an incredible responsibility to care for the valuable who are so often immature lambs and even the mature are open to attack. (The shepherd is willing to lay down his/her life for the sheep).
- **Coming to the point of hearing Jesus and answering the question: how much do you love me is a key point of significance again and again in our lives.** In realizing the love, the LORD has for us, and the weakness of our love for him – the opportunity arises to grow a stronger love response to Jesus which he teaches will result in a greater love for others. It will strengthen and enable us each day to have the possibility of learning to forgive others, to challenge others, to listen to others and just possibly to show something of the love Jesus has for them. Without facing Jesus and facing up to my own weaknesses of character and love for Jesus I am of limited use in the Kingdom of God. The more my love for Jesus grows the more my desire to please him in loving others should grow.

PRAYER used in recent weeks. How do I see others? (PP6)

JESUS, help me see you in everyone, even the people who challenge me. Light me up with your radiant love so that I may see you even in the most difficult people. Every human being is made in your image. Help me to recognise you in them and love you in them. Amen. (2)