

(PP1) The JESUS we never knew x37. Sunday 10th September_2017. Communion.

Read: John 15: 5 – 17.

AIM for this year and this theme: for each of us individually and together to become better friends with JESUS. That is the real Jesus – not the Jesus of sentiment or others invention.

There is a need therefore to get to know the historic Jesus but also to get to know Jesus experientially in our day to day relationship. In knowing Jesus, we get to know the Father God and the Holy Spirit with who he is One. Through Jesus we enter into relationship with the living God and are enabled to worship and enjoy God and also to serve God. (I am very grateful to Geoff for opening up some of the Parables of God's Kingdom through August – for it is in knowing Jesus that we begin to understand about King Jesus).

(PP2) JESUS: to know, to love, to follow.

So let us start with a significant claim of Jesus. People came to Jesus with all sorts of questions but some of them came asking like the rich young ruler how they might gain eternal life. It seems to me in **John 17: 3** that Jesus gave a clear and specific answer to what eternal life is: ***“Eternal life means knowing you the only true God, and knowing Jesus Christ who you sent.”***

So eternal life which we can enter into now is about relationship with the Father God and Jesus, God the Son. It is not just about doing religious things or serving others (important as these may be) – it is essentially about a relationship with God out of which many things will spring as fruits of that relationship.

It is not enough to simply know the facts about Jesus – that will never satisfy the human heart but about relationship with Jesus. It is about choosing to respond to Jesus – to receive him and actively believe and trust him (*John 1:12*). Jesus came in such a way into the world – as Son of Man, as fully human that we can approach God through him – he is truly the Way and the way to Fullness of life.

<p>PRAYER: that I may with God's grace come to know Jesus more deeply and intimately, and so love him and be enabled to follow him. Amen.</p>
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(PP3) John 15: 5. Jesus said, I am the Vine and you are the branches.

For hundreds of years God's people had been known as the Vine and for hundreds of years that relationship between God and his people had disappointed God – the fruit of lives lived in selfishness and rebellion was sour fruit and not sweet. Injustices were not corrected and human choices took people further away from God rather than into closer relationship with God. God's plan was not, however, to withdraw from the world and leave us to our own devices and the fruit of our own choices even though as a human race we often prefer darkness to light.

(PP4) To know Jesus deeply and intimately. Throughout the whole of Scripture – both The OT and The NT relationship with God is described in the deepest and closest of terms: descriptions of God as Family/ father, Lover and husband, and Jesus as Brother and Friend are used. (Selah) The first commandment is to love God with every part of ourselves and to love God more than anything else in all the Universe. God loves us because he loves us (*Deuteronomy 7:7*) and whatever we do God will still love us.

With his disciples (followers) Jesus developed deep and intimate friendships which was why betrayal and denial were so painful to him during his passion and death. He calls us **to be his friends....**(This is something we need to find time to stop and meditate upon and talk (colloquy) friend to friend and even face to face with Jesus. Infact in all of our daily struggles our relationship with Jesus needs to be our consolation, our inner strength – it is something that we need to relish in these dark days for the world.

This friendship with God through **salvation in Jesus is a GIFT** and cannot be earned (Ephesians 2: 8-10) but from a life given to God many fruits and good works will flow.

(PP5) To love Jesus. GOD took the initiative. “God is love”

Jesus: “I love you...” (John 15: 9). Can you hear Jesus say this to you.

“You did NOT choose me, but I chose you” (v16) – each of us is called. Pray to hear that call if you haven't. Ash for the grace – to know, to love, to follow.

God loved me before I loved God. *“We love because God first loved us” – 1 John 4: 19.*

God loved me while I was still in Sin and his enemy *Romans 5: 8.*

Within true friendship – love is showed in a willingness to lay down our lives for our friends and JESUS DID THAT. (He calls us to be willing to die in small part every day taking up our cross – living for him).

(PP6) To follow Jesus.

In order to follow Jesus, we must have spent time with Jesus, be getting to know him in a deepening way and learning what God's desires are so we may please God. *E.g. to act justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly.*

Following Jesus means learning how to be fully human and to live authentically.

In this passage about the Vine and the branches in relationship – remaining together Jesus calls us to remain as his friends by obeying him: choosing to give his desires precedence over our selfish desires. We need his grace to do that! It's my sub-human inclination if someone has wronged me and hurt me to hold onto that hurt and even to hurt back. It's Jesus' desire that we forgive those who trespass against us. Not to forgive of course ties us up in knots inside and psychologically and spoils our relationship with God. (Jesus was not tripped up by wealth, status/ honour and pride and if we follow him he can slowly enable us to choose his Way). PRAYER page 1.