

The JESUS we never knew x44. Sunday 29 October_2017.

Read: John 14:1 – 17.

Jesus special relationship with the father and the Spirit. 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. Aim to know both the historical Jesus and to know Jesus experientially now. To do this we need to be able to spend time with him relating and especially reading the Gospels. **The word “Trinity” is not used in the Bible but the descriptions and naming of the God who is 3 but united as ONE is very real.** It was Tertullian (150 – 240) who coined the term tri-unity to give us insights into the life of God.

Last week we considered Jesus’ own baptism and saw Jesus but also the Father and the Spirit in special relationship. Truly a trinitarian baptism. The three do not dance around one another politely – they are an interpenetrating circle dance (metaphor) – the Trinity is a relational community, which speaks to one another and remains together.

We see the **Godhead’s total commitment to bring in the Kingdom. The Christian Church is aware that this understanding of God as triune is controversial.** But God is controversial – set to challenge our assumptions and cause us to debate what we know and experience. While Christians declare with the other monotheistic faiths of Judaism and Islam that GOD IS ONE – we also claim that we experience God as triune – three persons both separate and perfectly united.

This is a teaching/ doctrine unique to Christians. There are many people that see Jesus simply as a great moral teacher. Professor Richard Dawkins in October 2011 said to the Guardian “*Jesus was a great moral teacher. Somebody as intelligent as Jesus would have been an atheist if he had known what we know today*”. But this makes no sense because Jesus did not just claim to believe in God he actually claimed to be one with God. On this the legendary C.S. Lewis is perhaps thinking more clearly when he says:

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

— C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

John says that he wrote his Gospel (20:31) so that the readers would believe that Jesus of Nazareth was not just Messiah but also Son of God and that by having faith in him they might experience life. As this is his purpose it is not surprising that he includes this amazing conversation that Jesus has with the confused and challenged disciples Thomas and Philip. They are “worried and upset” because Jesus is “leaving them”, and they fear those who want to kill him. He has introduced them to God as Father and is now speaking about going to “my Father’s house”. He describes his own relationship with the Father God in a way which at this stage in their thinking seems to confuse them further. Jesus acknowledges that they are going to need the help of God the Spirit to understand what he is trying to tell them. Here is what John records Jesus as saying:

Chapter 14 v9. He tells Philip “*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father*”.

He also declares that he is IN the Father and the Father is IN him and that his words are not his own but are from the Father who is doing his own work. (The Father’s glory is shown through the Son). Using the metaphor of Father and Son he describes and claims that as the son he has authority to grant any requests that they make.

V16. Jesus claims that he can ask the Father for another Helper who will stay with them forever. He is speaking to them of God the Spirit who reveals the truth about God. (Now this is what all those who seek after God want to know. There are enough bright ideas – we want to know the truth. Jesus describes the remaining (v17) of the Spirit with those who love him (Jesus) and obey his commands (v15). **JESUS OBVIOUSLY IS CERTAIN OF HIS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THE FATHER AND SPIRIT.** Thomas and Philip may find this deeply disturbing, but it is what Jesus is saying. The disciples are grappling to take in the nature of this relationship of Jesus with God the Father and Spirit. In 16: 4b Jesus says that he is only revealing these things now because he is going to the Father and they will need the ongoing help of the Spirit to get their minds around these things. **Chapter 16: 12** They couldn’t bear in one go to hear everything that he has to say to them. Also, Jesus teaches them that the Spirit will only teach them what he hears in the community of Godhead – there is one message as there is one God. V14 The Spirit is going to pass on what he hears Jesus say. V15 All the Father has belongs to Jesus and the Spirit will pass this on.

This same truth is reiterated in John 15: 14,15 when Jesus says that the disciples who love and obey him become his friends and as he is in union with the Father and the Spirit he shares with his friends what he hears. He repeats his claims on more than one occasion that his words, his teachings are not his own but come from the Father (14: 10; 15:15 and 12:49). The Father who sent him commanded him what to say (12:50) and he said it. 14: 24 These words are not my own – they belong to the Father who sent me. 14:26 If you forget then the Holy Spirit will remind you of everything “I said to you”.

Jesus declares that he loves the Father (14: 28 – 31) but he says other things too:

V6 No one comes to the Father except through me (I am the gatekeeper). V7 To know me is to know the Father. V9 You do know him and have seen him. (Given the strict

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Jewish belief that no one will see God and live (*) – this is amazing). 14: 10,11 He says twice: I am in the Father and the Father is in me.

To the early followers of Jesus his words must have been both wonderful and also frighteningly awesome...hardly believable.

He promises also even more – that the **disciples who love him and obey him** (his definition of discipleship) will come to understand that Jesus is in the Father, and the disciples are in Jesus, and Jesus is in the disciples. This is about our relationship of intimacy with the Godhead. We are not the same as God, but God has made us to know him. 14: 23 The Father loves whoever loves and obeys Jesus and the Father and the Son Jesus will come and make their home with us!

Not only is Jesus describing his own unique relationship in the Godhead with the Father and the Spirit but that true disciples of Jesus (those who love him and obey him) will also enter into the Godhead and the Godhead will make their home in them.

Jesus of Nazareth who said all this – **is much more than a *great moral teacher***. Great moral teachers are not delusional, and they do not lie. Jesus appealed to his followers to believe not just in God the Father but also in him because in seeing him they had seen the Father – they had seen God.

(*) See “God face-to-face” and live – Genesis 3: 8-10; Exodus 3:20)