

The JESUS we never knew x47. Sunday 19 November_2017.

(PP1) ENCOUNTERING JESUS: the restoration of the Imago Dei? (Gen 1: 27)

(Read: 2 Corinthians 3: 6 - 18.) PAUL IN THIS PASSAGE speaks about Moses and the appearance of God's Glory and contrasts this with the unfading Glory of God's New Covenant in Jesus Christ. When Moses came down from the mountain and after he went in to meet with God in the tent of Meeting (*Exodus 34: 29 – 35*) the Glory showing on his face only lasted a short while and then it faded but v11 there is a Glory that will last forever and will not fade – in the face of Jesus. Also in Jesus the “veil of closed minds” (v14) is removed when a person is “joined to the Lord” or “turns to the Lord” (This is Paul's terminology). *V17 Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom*. Under the Law of Moses people are veiled or **mind closed to the truth of God. *V16* When we “turn to the Lord” the veil is taken away. Moses wore the veil so that the people would not see that the glory of his encounter with God was fading and be disappointed. Indeed, Paul is hinting strongly that **the Old Covenant is fading and that the New Covenant glory is forever**. In the New Covenant (v18) we ALL – have unveiled faces and are beholding the glory of God (in the face of Jesus) and are being changed by degrees – from glory to glory – by the Spirit of the Lord. Nevertheless, it is an awesome thing to come into the presence of God – even if we come because Jesus brings us safely in...**

especially verse 18.

ALL OF US, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord who is the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever-greater degree of glory. (Restoration Imago Dei – image of God?)

LASTWEEK we began thinking about Encountering Jesus. Our AIM for this year and this theme is for each of us individually and all of us together to become better friends with JESUS. (This is not presumptuous since Jesus himself has said *“I call you friends” John 15: 15* – disciples are those who love and obey 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 in **prayer** and this includes reading the Bible especially reading and meditating on the Gospels.

It is the clear understanding of Christians that we encounter God **in the person of Jesus Christ**. (As revealed in Scripture and in person).

Here is what John in his Gospel records Jesus as saying:

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

Saul also known as Paul (who wrote the Letters to the Corinthians and many of the letters to churches and individuals in the NT) was a Pharisee who had lived his whole

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life based on what he thought were the teachings of the Mosaic Law before he discovered through the revelation of the resurrected Jesus that he had been resisting the Messiah sent by God. Paul came to believe when he wrote to the Colossians (1) that – ***Jesus is the visible likeness of the invisible God 1: 15***. (Jesus truly God and fully human. Also 2 C 4:4 Jesus image of God).

(1) Colossians written 50s AD; Acts written 80-90 AD and 2 Corinthians written 55 AD.

Today we continue thinking about how we may deepen our encounter with Jesus and so with the Father and the Spirit. It is obviously going to involve commitment on our part – both investment of our time, our resolve and our very selves as we take part in the relationship. We surely cannot doubt God's commitment to us since God loved us before we loved him (*Romans 5: 7 – 9*) and he has in Jesus shown the extent of his love – but as we are only human and full of fear and self we may doubt. But God has made the first move towards me – **so let us dare to approach God**.

Is this a challenging or a comfortable seat as we sit in Jesus? As Saul discovered on his Damascus Road encounter (**Acts 9**) and many others have also discovered this encountering will not be according to our parameters and our predetermined wrong notions may be dispelled. Jesus as it were calls the shots and sets the agenda for change (because he loves us).

We have already mentioned the felt need we may have as humans to meet with God and that there are things in our lives which will battle against this – not least our over busyness. We can encounter God no doubt in many places and ways for example through music, creation, human creativity and so on but to be better able to interpret those encounters and to know God personally we need to encounter God in the person, in the face of Jesus Christ. We need to make the time and space to settle down into Jesus and as I said a few weeks ago this can be like sitting in a comfortable arm chair



feeling his arms around us. My favourite seat...

BUT in Jesus this may be a comfortable or even an unsettling experience.

Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth (2nd letter) and described the encounter not as sitting in an arm chair but as looking into a mirror – and it's this image of looking

into God that we will stay with today. **WHAT DO PEOPLE SEE IN OUR FACES WHEN WE COME AWAY FROM HAVING ENCOUNTERED GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS?**

The people who saw Moses coming out of God's presence would have seen a fading glory – that's why he veiled his face so that they were not disappointed. **By coming to Jesus (not just once) by turning towards Jesus repeatedly (and away from the Law of religious rules and consequent shame) –** we gain understanding and the veil of misunderstanding is removed. Understanding of God and understanding of ourselves grows and In this new relationship we experience **metamorphosis or transformation** – we look as it were into a mirror and are changed to be more like Jesus – more fully human. (grubs or caterpillars to butterflies: maturity – movement pollination from plant to plant). Coming to Jesus, turning towards Jesus, and transformation are Paul's constant themes and part of his own story. E.g. also used in *Romans 12: 1 and 2* the understanding of metamorphosis – the offering of our whole selves – even our bodies in sacrifice. The process of mind transformation and of life-long dying of self and being raised with Jesus. We are transformed in our minds to think in different ways.

Encountering Jesus brings about change for the better. Well it should do provided we desire to co-operate rather than resist the changes Jesus tells us he wants to make.

Paul's encounter with the resurrected Jesus did change. He looked into the face of Jesus but also saw himself in a different light – a more accurate light.

2 Corinthians 3: 18 he argued that we **all** (Believers) now can approach God with unveiled faces (as did only Moses before). We read the Law of Moses and the Old Covenant with unveiled minds and can understand the true nature of God and of God's plan. **The NT (and indeed the OT) is about encountering God. Jesus makes this possible.** *The Law came through Moses. Grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ (John 1:17).*

We need God's grace to see and to hear Jesus: personal encounter in PRAYER.

The experience of prayer including interior movements and responses to God's love, and the stirring of our affections and emotions is important. We seek in prayer on our own and with others to discern and know what God is affirming in us as pleasing but also to know the things that God is challenging about our attitudes and responses. We should want to choose well – according to the desires of God. (There are others that we walk with as co-discerners: friends and co-workers, pastors, and spiritual directors or companions. Also, we have the Bible with is as God's revelation of truth. The biographies and numerous stories of notable saints of God are a great help in encountering God and discovering what is pleasing and possible).

WHAT DO PEOPLE SEE IN OUR FACES WHEN WE COME AWAY FROM HAVING ENCOUNTERED GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS? What do we reflect back to others?

If we are open to being changed then hopefully others will see the work of God in a positive way in our lives. However, it should be recognised that not everyone may appreciate the changes ...they may not like our changes of mind, heart and even our changes of behaviour – even if they come about slowly. These changes may distance us from some and bring us closer to others. (Some people were drawn to Jesus and others repelled. To some we smell sweet and to others we may smell of death...).

We may even leave behind some of our former religious beliefs and practices, as did Paul and many others and that may offend some.

The Spirit of the Lord liberates says Paul and I hope that as you encounter Jesus you experience a greater liberation from the things that bind you and the behaviours that you are addicted to. I would expect a greater longing for righteousness and to please God to grow. V18 A greater identification with Jesus Christ – that comes from meditating on Jesus' behaviour as recorded in the Gospels especially. I would expect a greater love for Jesus to grow and a greater love and compassion for other people too.

This change of mind, heart and behaviour transformation Paul says will happen in slow stages – by degrees. Enduring changes not skin-deep changes that fade like a sun tan.

“ONLY the grace of God is kind enough and the power of God strong enough to achieve this transformation in our broken and darkened lives.” Paul Barnett p76 BST 2C.

Some will say that there will be no physical transformation in the body and visage of a person who spends time with Jesus. I beg to differ. I have seen people released of physical and mental tension and anxiety and faces lit up as “burdens are lifted” and the knowledge of God's love for them dawns. I have seen eyes that sneer and people who won't meet you in the eye able to do so in openness and honesty. Others will in time I think experience the positive changes in us and hopefully be drawn by the Spirit closer to Jesus Christ and so into experience of God and Salvation.