

The Jesus we never knew x48 Sunday 26 November_2017. Encountering **Jesus (3)**.

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(PP1) ENCOUNTERING JESUS: in the weakness and ordinariness of everyday – GOD WITHIN US.

(Read: 2 Corinthians 4: 1 - 10.)

LAST 2 WEEK 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* – Christian 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 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 Corinthians (1) that – **Jesus is the image and exact likeness of the invisible God 2C 4:4**. (Jesus truly God and fully human.

(1) Acts written 80-90 AD and 2 Corinthians written 55 AD.

PAUL in chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians 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. 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.

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)

Today we continue thinking about how we may deepen our encounter with Jesus and so with the Father and the Spirit – even in our weakness and the ordinariness

of the everyday. 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 us– and amazingly he **has come to live within us.** *John 14: 23. (READ)* Paul also describes an INTERIOR ENCOUNTER with God – not just an outward and upward encounter but an inner “witness” of the Spirit to belonging to God.

The God who said, “Out of darkness the light shall shine!” is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of Christ.

Yet we who have this spiritual treasure are like common clay pots, in order to show that the supreme power belongs to God and not to us. (VV6 & 7)

This change of mind, heart and behaviour transformation Paul says will happen in slow stages – by degrees as we co-operate with God who has come and made his home in us. 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.

We always need to begin by an **awareness that the promise of God is within**. Those who *love Jesus and obeys his teaching which is from the Father* have within them God. This presence, relationship will bring about a change of mind, heart and behaviour transformation.

We are not just talking about changes brought about by a religious system or rules, regulations and rituals but inner change. Paul who knew all about the former just wanted to tell the Corinthians about the *supreme power OF GOD* to bring about change. He valued the treasure of God's presence and power within him beyond everything and anything. **He said that he and all of us who have this treasure within are like common clay pots.** We are human – made from “earth”, weak and compared to God lacking in glory and beauty. BUT the grace and power of God has come within.

We are on open display to the world. V2 *We live in God's sight* and not just the sight of other people. God knows us from within. **Paul describes the openness and transparency and honesty of his work and methods but is also honest about his mood and emotions. On occasions he is – troubled but not crushed; sometimes in doubt but never in despair; there are many enemies, but we are never without a friend; and though badly hurt at times, we are not destroyed. (vv 8 and 9). I like Paul's honesty. Be honest about difficulty. Despite opposition (externally) and difficulty (within), he is aware that he has a treasure that **others do NOT have**. He continues his work to tell**

others the Good News and is not discouraged from doing this. **It is surely his inner relationship with God through Jesus that sustains him.**

Others are blind to the light shining on them. “Blinded” – minds kept in the dark by the “evil god of this world”. They believe the lies that are spoken about what brings happiness. (He remembers that once he was blind to the truth of Jesus). V7 – he is aware of his weakness (a clay pot) and no longer boasts. He acknowledges that the demonstration he gives to the world is of a weak, fragile human being empowered by God (therefore it is God not Paul that should be praised). OTHERS can know that they too can be empowered and changed by God’s grace and power.

Note this my brothers and sisters – if we are aware of our own nature and ordinariness as human people ...then we are part way to understanding. And if we become aware and encounter JESUS – the treasure within us then we are beginning to know true strength. God’s supreme power is at work in us who believe in Jesus and obey the teaching of the Father and the Son. God’s strength is perfected in our weakness. We were created to worship, enjoy and serve God and in this we find our true identity and life.

To grow in strength, we need to become aware not just our own weakness but the love of God for us and his presence within us. READ verse 10 – *At all times we carry in our bodies the death of Jesus, so that his life may be seen in our bodies.*

We have spoken of encountering God in the person of Jesus and we have spoken of Jesus revealed to us and the world through Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit. We have also talked of the many ways we can encounter the transcendent God through all forms of creativity – music, mathematics and so on. But Paul speaks of an **encountering and knowing God as God the treasure who comes to live WITHIN US.**

God has made his light shine in our hearts – the centre of our affections and will and being. To give us an INNER knowledge of God’s own glory.

It is in this deep inner realisation – that the deepest assurance of God’s love and grace is known. It is the treasured glory of God in the human life – an enduring light within a “simple clay pot” – that not only gives me inner light but can shine out to others for God’s glory. Be STILL and KNOW that God is within – those who believe and obey...