

(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 40 Sunday 07 October_2018.

What is it that attracts you to JESUS? (Marks of a human)

I am assuming that because you are here you are in some way attracted by his life...for me it's simply the combination of the way he lived his life as a person, the things he said and the completeness of his spirituality and understanding and relationship within God. He has something that I admire, respect and want. (I got to that stage in life where I am much more reflective about everything I do now but also about what I have previously chosen to do).

Text **Matthew 5: 1 – 12. READ.**

(PP2) 2 weeks ago, we began looking at Jesus' teaching on human thriving and wellbeing. (Partly because we are running the Happiness Course locally. Allegory of the fruitful vine: *John 15*).

Last week we looked at: **James 1: 19 – 27. PURE and genuine religion as God sees it.**

JAMES the early church leader writes to God's people scattered all over the known world. **Chapter 1 and Verses 26 and 27 which we focussed on** – talk about the sort of "religion" that God the Father considers pure and clean, authentic and real. James gives **3 marks of true religion and he is talking here using the word THRESKEIA or religion to mean worship/ spirituality – the external expression of what is in the heart.**

- To have control of our speech (See *chapter 3*)
- To visit widows and orphans – the poor/ powerless
- To keep ourselves unspotted from the world (See *4:4*)

James is very clear that faith without actions is dead or as **JESUS put it (Beatitudes – by their fruits you will know them)**. In *chapters 5 through 7 in Matthew* the core of Jesus' teaching on being truly fully human is expressed. This is his teaching about what is pleasing to God and in that sense also what will bring glory to God. In these teachings Jesus is surely focussing in on what Jesus and those who follow him take as being fully human – created for relationship with God and to image God's heart in human behaviour and attitudes.

(PP3) Supreme blessedness: Matthew 5: 3 -11.

Without a doubt this condition or experience of blessedness (human happiness – which is coveted by others) is not achieved just through aspiration and effort. God's grace is needed – to enter and experience this depth of blessing (other faiths talk of baraka (Islam – Arabic word) or even the karma spoken of in Hinduism and Buddhism. Karma is to do with cause and effect – a Sanskrit word).

Each of the 8 or 9 beatitudes is like a proclaimed proverb: *Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully.* (v6)

JESUS in his teaching is surely correcting many of the false understandings that have arisen over many generations about the God and Human relationship. Hence his use of the phrase: *You have heard it said BUT I say to you...*(5:21) Religious systems and philosophies because of human nature become corrupted over a period of time – there is a constant need to go back to what is really pleasing to God to keep what is pure – so that we might move forward. What is Jesus really saying in his claims to be the Way, the Truth and the Light?

5: 13, 14 Jesus calls upon his followers to be like SALT for the human race and LIGHT for the whole world. Something that should make us cry out for grace and help from God.

Call of JESUS: to live prophetically (VV11 and 12) – speaking the truth about God and people, and living the truth. This is the reason why many have chosen to follow Jesus – seeking to live genuinely counter-cultural lives.

JESUS in what he said and how he behaved exhibited and demonstrated what it is to be truly human – ***Blessed are the peacemakers – they are the true children of God*** (v9). (Truly human).

What is it that appealed to us to make us want to follow Jesus? For me it is something to do with the inner pull / draw I feel to want to be more fully human both individually and in community. It was something that I saw in my 15th/ 16th years and following in the lives of people and expressed in Christian community that attracted me (Fun, prayer, Bible discussion, eating together, mutual care, ethical concerns +++) At the time I didn't analyse the attraction I just wanted to experience it. I was also very dissatisfied with what the world of the 1960s had to offer). Most importantly the person of Jesus appealed to me as the sort of person I wanted to be like.

READ John 1: 10 – 14. I wanted to be a true child of God and somehow this was tied into receiving and believing in Jesus not just as the true human being but the eternal LOGOS.

Matthew in his Gospel on various occasions speaks about Jesus looking at the CROWDS of people – they are spoken of in this chapter in v1. But also, here he draws his Disciples apart and surrounds himself with those who want to follow him more closely. (In *Matthew 9: 3* we are told by Matthew that Jesus viewed the mass of people with compassion – because they were *anxious, helpless – like sheep without a shepherd.* Jesus knew the lostness and dangers that people faced. The inference is strong that he wanted to be their “Lord and Shepherd”).

To his disciples (followers) Jesus spoke about living a blessed life – a life of fullness and wellbeing based on a deep inner conviction and set of values – with an outer way of behaving in the world.

He spoke about living prophetically in the world (vv11 & 12) – as he himself Jesus did. This counter-cultural living would challenge the people of the world but would (as in his case) result in opposition: insults, persecutions and evil lies being spoken against those who live this way (live righteously). He said that there would be later reward but without a doubt he was not and is not offering an easy way of life or an opt out of the world.

Jesus is describing a way of being and living in community. This is not a check list of virtues to put a tick or a cross against. Not so much a list of virtues we may or may not have but a way of being that is showing humility, an awareness of spiritual impoverishment and need of God's help, being a people who show mercy and so on.

This is a call to follow, a call to lifestyle, and a way of being individually and in community. Jesus' call is to be God's people – living among all the peoples of the world but distinctive and holy (set apart for God's use).

Matthew 6: 8 “Do not be like them”. Be different from the Pagans but also the Scribes and the Pharisees.

There is to be an apparent contrast between the way others and us live our lives if we follow Jesus. A contrast not just with the Pagans who do not acknowledge God but the ultra-religious Pharisees and Scribes. We are to be neither proud or our learned ethical theology like the Scribes were or hypocrites like the Pharisees.

JESUS' “teaching on the hill” (A.B. Bruce) probably happened over a few days and several sessions. It's not just one sermon.

If we believe that God created humanity in his image to be jointly in a relationship of friendship and love, then we have much to discover about our full potential as human beings. These teachings of Jesus will surely give key insights into what being a true child of God's Kingdom means.

What is it that attracts you to Jesus? What is it that repels others from following Jesus or even turning back?