

12th Sept 2021 - 15th After Trinity

Mark 8. 27-38 - Love God, with all of you.

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

28 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

29 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus Predicts His Death

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

The Way of the Cross

34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save their life[a] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? 37 Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Peter makes this amazing statement - Jesus is not just a prophet, he's not even John the Baptist come back from the dead. And then there is Elijah - who didn't die remember, but went up in a chariot to heaven, and so the rumour spread that he would return to Earth before the Messiah - he would announce the Messiah's arrival. No. Peter dares to say - that Jesus is the Messiah himself. The one they've been waiting for.

But before we get too carried away, and before Peter does. Lets remember - Peter got the name right - Messiah, but he clearly didn't know what the Messiah Really was about. Which is not Peter's fault.

Peter, like most Jews, thought the Messiah would come and lead a mighty army, like King David, and he would throw out the Romans, unite the country, and be a priestly king.

And we know Peter was thinking the wrong thing, because straight away after Jesus accepts that he is the Messiah, he tells them how he must suffer and die, and Peter is like - No, no - that's not how I imagined it! And Jesus says - well you've got the

wrong idea then! And calls him Satan (I think Jesus was a bit hacked off).

And like Peter saying Messiah, but not understanding its meaning or significance - we all do this all the time.

And I don't just mean like when we say "holiday" we usually forget the origin of Holy Days - days of pilgrimage, which became days out.

I mean like when people get married, they say, its great, we love each other, lets tell the world and make it permanent. They don't realise they're promising to love someone forever - they're making a promise that no-one know if they can keep. Or when we buy something and use money - remember that paper and coin stuff? But even the card - we know that it will be called £5 - but we have no idea why it works - if there's gold in some safe somewhere, or if someone really can promise to pay the bearer and all that.

So lets take the word God, or calling Jesus the Christ (which is another word for Messiah).

We sing and we say that we believe in God, or that Jesus is Lord.

And we've got the name right - God means universal supreme being.

Jesus is the Lord of all creation

But have we got the meaning right? Like Peter, do we really understand what we're saying?

When we call him our Lord we mean that we trust him with everything, he is in charge, he has it all.

We say we want to Love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

That's one of our aims isn't it - to Love God?

Today I want to focus in on a little word in that sentence - to Love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Its the OUR bit..

We say we will love god with **our** heart, **our** soul, with the strength that **we** have.

We promise, and we are commanded, to love God our way - you're a unique person, I expect you have unique thoughts, ideas - particular ways of showing your love to others.

And so it should be with us to God. Some of us show our love fro God by singing, others by sitting still. Some show it by raising their hands - others by raising their eyebrows.

We are so many different types of people, and God wants us to love him in our many different ways.

(Think of all of creation - God made the cows to moo, and the birds to sing, and flowers to open - all different ways of expressing - so why do we think it would be any different in church?).

So we have many different ways of worshipping, that's a posh word for showing our love - we have different ways in St James, and they have different ways in the Chapel - but we're just saying the same thing in different ways.

And St Paul calls the church - the body of Christ. He calls us here - a body. And he says that just like a body has lots of different parts, so there are lots of different types of people in a congregation. Some of us will feel like a foot - always trodden on - or supporting everyone. Some of us feel like an arm - we reach out. Some of us are like those tiny bones in the ear - no-one sees us or notices, but without us the whole body would be deaf!

And what's crucial, essential, vital - is that we don't try to be something we're not! You've all seen the pantomime horse - oh yes you have! Its no good if the back legs are trying to be front legs! Its no good in the body of Christ if we're all trying to be one or two things. In fact its no good if you're trying to be something you're not.

Bring what you have to God - your strength, your mind, your soul.

Sometimes churches can be organised so one person tells others what to do - a bit like a captain in a ship. Its one way. It can be quite efficient. You need it on a ship. Sometimes that can be the vicar - I think you should run Sunday school, you're going to be our new finance office. And people go along, with the famous phrase - "Father knows best".

Well, I don't want to say that's bad - but I can't do that - its not in me! And I can't lead this church that way!

I think you should listen to **your** heart, and see what God is asking **you** to do. He brought you to this church, and he has a job, a part, a role in mind for you. Just you. So I'm waiting for you to listen and hear God say that - and then come to me and say - Simon I think God might want me to do X, y. Or Z.

And we're going to get a bit stuck if you're waiting for me to ask you to do jobs And I waiting for you to respond to what God is saying. There's going to be a long silence!

And there are lots of things to do to run the church, lots of things the body of Christ needs to keep alive -

There's working in the cafe, or helping with the churchyard, there's handling money and accounting skills, serving at the altar, singing or playing an instrument.

Readers intercessors, Sunday club helpers, vestry leaders - and its not that those are all short - its just that's where God might be calling you. And my homework, my charge, is to go home and pray about what God wants **you** to do in the body of christ that is St James.

But let me tell you something every more exciting. When you listen to God, you don't just get the vicar's list of "where we could do with a little help", you get the things we don't have going on, or the things no-one's ever imagined.

Like in 2003 - no one had heard of Messy Church - that's because it didn't exist until someone responded to what God was saying. Now there's 2,800 in the UK, and it's spread to over 30 countries.

Or The Trussell Trust, which is a food bank we were involved with in Salisbury. When it started in our church hall in 2005 there was 1, now there are more than 1300, and they lobbied and changed government law, as well as inspiring hundreds of other food-banks.

Or Poitiers, or Taizé, - things that were unimaginable - never heard of ..

It's about using your talents and going with it. One of our congregation, felt a call to produce a leaflet about the war memorials - and here it is. Who knows how many people will be blessed through this - we don't know what it will do, but it will be part of God's plan, kingdom.

Or someone else, you know who, loved God with all their crafting and knitting, so nothing could stop them responding to that call, and saying - can I start a needlecraft group? Who knows how God is using that - but I do know that it is part of the body of Christ, and it is part of Loving God with all **their** heart, soul, mind and strength.

And sometimes it will go wrong - we will make mistakes, or fail, or fall over - that's how we learn to walk you know - by falling over. We learn to speak by saying nonsense. Everyone needs to have 2nd and 3rd and 4th chances, in fact Jesus said 490 (but I don't think he meant literally to add it up and keep a record) But that's ok, God says we're forgiven, and perfect people don't need forgiveness - so he must have known and made it ok for us to get up and try again.

And This is discipleship- when Jesus says - whoever wants to be my disciple - and you think that's an odd word.. yes it's studying the bible, and praying, and worshipping, and all that, but overall - it's trying to find what God wants **you** to do with **your** gifts.

And that's means now - not what he used to want me to do.

But now, now that your 50 or 60 or 70 or 80 or even as youthful as Abraham and Sarah!

It doesn't matter - while you're here, you're part of the body and you've got a role. Just don't ask me to tell you what it is, it's up to you find out - What does God want me to do?

Then we will be fulfilling our aim - we love God, with all of who we are.