

Group Notes 12 December 2010

Humility

Welcome - Ice Breaker

'It should have been me!' – can the group think of occasions or events in their lives, when something happened to someone else and it should have happened to you. Share the most amusing ones.

Sermon Summary: Read John 3:22-36

- Maybe not a word associate with John the Baptist (JTB), assertive preacher, not one to mince words. To be humble, handle something with humility suggests someone meek tempered and bit of a retiring personality. Not so JTB
- Firstly look at the context of reading, which in itself raises some surprises
- Ministry of JTB and Jesus Christ is full swing, at this point working separately. JTB is with his disciples in Aenon, near Salim and Jesus in Judean countryside with his disciples. Both baptizing people.
- Conflict arises over baptism, is it ceremonial washing, or a mark of entry to a new way? A 'certain' Jew raises the questions. Envy and jealousy seems to have arisen, 'that man, was with you, baptising and people going to him!'
- JTB's actions; he explains again that he is not the Messiah, but has been sent ahead to prepare the way, he is happy to be the friend who attends, he is not the bridegroom, not the main player – and he is happy with that situation.
- Continues to assert, gently rebuke those, who have raised the issue, Jesus is from above, some places where his message has not been received, are still a place of darkness. Jesus is working with God's Spirit.
- JTB explains what will happen to those who continue to reject God, they will not see life, God's wrath rests on them.
- Gospel reading is speaking about fragmentation, real and possible when competition with Jesus Christ. JTB followers were intent on making him an 'institution' in his own right. Full of envy, jealousy and rivalry. Not word usually like to use within a church setting but..... human institution built on human enterprise and personality
- Jealousies and envy between churches, even dare I say between congregations within churches, between individuals, fragmentation, not unity
- Core of JTB's argument against his followers views is an understanding of Jesus that sets him apart from every other human being. JC is superior to any other person on earth. He has 'come from above' he has been sent by God and God has given him the spirit without limit. JTB cannot rival these credentials. Every form of human wisdom, every form of religious expression must be seen as secondary to the revelation that we possess in Jesus Christ. Indeed, every one must decrease so that Jesus Christ alone is seen.
- What does this mean for us today – last four verses speak this out – read again v32-36. Many Christians today this about the work of Christ as something to placate an angry God, something to appease an angry God. Seems to make God to be an opponent and an adversary, and putting Jesus as very definitely our ally. But if we take John 3.16 to heart 'God so loved the world' the work of Christ is God at work. God is at work on our behalf, he didn't send a messenger to do his work (Jesus) God himself came to the cross and suffered to bring us back to him. The cross then is God's work, Jesus came to earth not to change God's mind, but to express his mind. Those who reject the Son will not see life, God's wrath will rest on them, not God's anger, but that they will remain in the world of darkness, those who refuse the light, remain in darkness and continue to live under divine judgement. Those who do not reject the Son will see life.
- JTB knew he was not the one and had the courage, the humility to say this outloud. He pointed to the one, to Jesus and said he the one who can lead you from darkness into light. JTB knew that fragmentation would be a barrier to the new believers, just as it can be a barrier to us 2000 years on.

- When we speak of Jesus today, let us do so without envy or jealousy and rivalry, but with humility like JTB, acknowledging that he is the one and only who can save.

-

Word 2 - Discussion Questions:-

- Why do you think we find humility such an odd state of being?
- How important is being humble to Christian life?
- John the Baptist was the older cousin, how do you think the life of the two boys differed while they were growing up? Do you think they would have played together?

Worship Ideas

Read the gospel out loud, perhaps each person taking a line at a time. Spend a few moments reflecting on Humility. If appropriate share these reflections but if not end with silence.

Closing Prayer

- Thank you Lord for sending John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus to do his work. We are thankful that John the Baptist had the humility to recognise that he was here to prepare the way. Help us to embrace this same humility, to put aside anything that may fragment our faith, our church, our lives. Help us not to lose sight of the one who can bring us out of darkness into the light.

Works / Witness

We have had 100s of people through the doors of St Matthew's in the last few days, praise God for these opportunities to witness and model Christian life.

Pray that in the coming weeks the planned services will be opportunities for people to meet with God.