

Trinity Sunday - Discipleship 1

11/06/17 18:30 St Peter

This Sunday we begin an eight week sermon series on Discipleship. We will think together on the marks of being a disciple, and how our discipleship of Christ calls us to trust and follow Jesus. Our discipleship starts at our baptism, and lasts the rest of our lives. And yet, all too often we only address our faith on a Sunday. This sermon series asks us to examine how we follow Jesus each day of the week.

Our first reading tonight reminds us of the centrality of love in our lives. In an election campaign that has been dominated by two terrorist attacks, and in a world that in so many other ways tells us of the lack of love, we do need to remind ourselves that at the heart of the Christian faith stands the bold proclamation of God who loves us. So firstly, our understanding of discipleship must be rooted in the knowledge of God who loves us so much. But our world is very mixed up about love. Oliver Twist sang, "Where O Where is Love?". Someone wrote on the toilet cubicle: "Love is all I want". And someone had scribbled underneath, "Sex is all you get!".

The early church took an old, colourless Greek word, used rarely, and adapted it for their own purposes. Agape is love that gives without expecting a return. For the sake of the salvation of the world, God gives his own Son to the world.

Different creeds have tried to define their own understanding of God. Some say God is fear; others that God is light. But Christianity teaches us that God is love. All God's activity is loving activity. When God creates, it is done in love. When God judges, it is done in love. The Gospels answer to human anxiety and meaningless is clear - God is love. For the disciple of Christ, this must always be the core of our proclamation. To a world hurting so much, we must proclaim God is love. To our nation uncertain, perhaps afraid: God is love. To this community, where people look for identity, for hope, for the answers to questions of life: God is love.

We have called this sermon series "Step Out Of The Boat! Being a Disciple in 21st-Century Caversham". That title emanates from our second reading tonight, when Jesus walks on water and invites Peter to step out of the boat on the lake and walk with him. In the coming weeks we will be invited to think about the boat on the lake as a metaphor for our own, often comfortable, position - where we find ourselves in life. We will together think together what it might mean to be invited by God out of these 'boats'. We will think together how we need to keep our focus on Christ, and to walk with him wherever he leads us. We will think together how the call to discipleship is always corporately with other disciples, and never on our own.

But tonight we remember that the call to journey with Jesus comes from the one who is love. As St John wrote in that first reading - God is love: God is our understanding of love. We are invited to step out and walk with the one who is Love - if you like to enter into love itself. But this requires us to be active, and not passive, in that love. Our faith cannot and must not just be for Sundays, or to stay in the privacy of our own homes. God looked on our world gone wrong, and took action to redeem it. Jesus' ministry was always public, and focused on the needs of other people. He is model as a Church. As disciples, we are therefore to attend to our faith, actively rather than passively. These next few weeks of sermons are intended to help us do that, as we think together on how our Discipleship might grow.

Father God, we look to you now for encouragement, for hope, for direction and for purpose. Our faith is little but your love is great: so call us and strengthen us, we pray, to let go of where we found Jesus yesterday and to follow him joyfully today, wherever he may lead. Amen.