

The Parish of All Saints' and Saint Saviour's. Lent Study 2012.

Session 2.

The Christ.

Bible Reading

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his clothes became dazzlingly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them. Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter spoke to Jesus: 'Rabbi,' he said 'it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and there came a voice from the cloud, 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.' Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them any more but only Jesus.

Mark 9:2-10

In last week's study group, we heard how the Bible not only gave an account of how God had worked through the centuries to bring salvation to his chosen people, but it also gave us an account of Jesus Christ's ministry and teaching. In this week's session we will look at Jesus himself, and see how he can point us towards God and ultimately salvation.

In the new Testament, we are given many images of Jesus. We have the Christmas story, with the baby in the manger, which tells us that Jesus was human; he had a human birth, with a human Mother, who gave birth to him in the normal human way. But the Angels singing "Glory to God on high", and the worship of the shepherds also tell us that this was no ordinary human birth. This is a birth that God himself had had a hand in. And the story of the Annunciation, when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary, to tell her that she had been chosen to give birth to the Messiah tells us that not only would Jesus be human, but he also would be divine; the Son of God.

Chapter two of Luke's Gospel gives us the account of the adolescent Jesus who stays behind in the Temple in Jerusalem, debating theology with the wise. His parents are besides themselves with worry, but when they find Jesus, he cannot understand why they are worried, and thinks they are fussing. What a typically human adolescent response, that tells us that even at an early age Jesus is aware of his divine identity.

And then we have the story of the transfiguration, our Bible reading for this session. The Gospel for Lent 2. We see a picture of Jesus as he really is, fully human and fully divine. Even the disciples cannot grasp the enormity and complexity of Jesus. It was God's voice from heaven proclaiming Jesus as his Son that gave some understanding. God, as always is in control if we stop and listen to his voice.

As we discussed last week, the Gospels gave us an account of the things that Jesus did and said during his earthly ministry. But the Gospels also give us some understanding of the sort of human being that Jesus actually was. Throughout the Gospels we read of Jesus healing and raising from the dead. In part, this is to demonstrate the power that he has, although this is never done as an ego-trip. Jesus is never saying “look at me, aren’t I good. Look what I do.” No, he is simply demonstrating his power in order to show that he is the Son of God, and to help people to believe and to follow him.

But there is another, more important reason in the Gospels as to why Jesus heals and helps those who ask him. That reason is simply Love. Jesus is compassionate; he wants to wipe away tears, and take away our suffering. And that is the very crux of our Christian faith. God is Love, Jesus is God, Jesus Loves us. And in the words of John’s Gospel, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that all who believe in Him shall not die, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) The love of Jesus for the whole of the world leads him not only to help them during his earthly ministry, but to die for the salvation of the whole world. Most of us are not called to give the same sacrifice as Jesus; to die for him, but we are all called to Love like him, and to lead a life of sacrifice and giving for others. That includes what we give financially to the church and other charities, how we give of our time to the Church family, and those in need in our community, and how much we give of ourselves to others.

In the week ahead, let us think and pray about what we give, and the sacrifices that we make in the name of Christ, and let us seek to imitate our Saviour in the loving sacrifices that we make in his name.

Prayer.

Teach us, Good Lord,
To Serve Thee as Thou deservest;
To give and not to count the cost;
To fight and not to heed the wounds;
To labour and not to ask for any reward,
save that of knowing that we do Thy will.
Through Jesus Christ Our Lord, Amen