

Sermon.Proper 16.August 24th 2014

preached by Revd Caroline Sackley at Puy de Serre

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, declares Peter. That is what makes us Christians, Jesus isn't just someone important, not another prophet or saint, but the Son of God. Although in the 16th Century the idea of Peter as the rock on which the church was built and from that of course, the Papacy, it is in reality Jesus upon which everything is built.

He is our corner stone, our love of God, our very life itself is dependent on us recognising and living that out. It is not always easy to be a Christian in today's world, to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. In Paul's letter the word body means more than our physical body, it is ourselves as a whole person. We need to be changed if we are to give our whole selves to God, we can't go on living in the same way, we need to be wholly involved in the practice of discipleship. Which like any other discipline involves changes being made, to our lives, to our thinking.

How does believing in Christ change people? Some addicts have found that it is only after they have acknowledged Christ as Saviour that they are able to change their behaviour and thus their lives. Some people have given up their worldly riches and earning power to work with the world's poorest. Criminals and the sick are among the many who can testify to the transformation that turning to Christ brings.

These may seem like extremes to you, but how has Christ changed you and your life? The disciples gave up their fishing on much less evidence than we have. It has to be more than giving up half an hour a day to read the Bible and pray, good as this is it has to be life changing as well. Remember how falling in love with someone changes your life, changes your thoughts, it's hard to stop thinking of them, planning things that please them, doing what they want rather than being selfish. Remember the delight, the happiness, the glow that being in their presence brings?

Why shouldn't we be like that about God? God knows us more completely than anyone, he knew us when we were formed in our mothers' womb, he knows our deepest darkest secrets, he knows our strengths and weaknesses. And, despite all that, he loves us more than anyone else, more than we could ever know.

God loves us just as we are, but we are also supposed to grow and change as we experience the depth of that love. It is unconditional love but also love that cannot fail to change us as we try to please him.

He loves each and everyone of us, despite how different we are, despite how unworthy we may feel. Paul reminds how our differences in many ways are our strength as members of the church, the body of Christ. We need many types of workers and gifts to make up the whole. We need to recognise what our gifts and skills are and to give them generously both in kind and spirit.

Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, our Saviour, how wonderful that is. May the joy of that knowledge infuse our beings and show in our lives and in the life of his church. Amen