

asked for Baptism. The Spirit in the form of a dove coming down on Jesus as John Baptised Him was the promised sign from God to John to enable hi to identify the Messiah . John had to be open and responsive and as he went about his business, teaching and Baptising with water all those who were prepared to hear that God was doing a new thing, John was waiting and looking for the sign the God had promised him. He saw it at Jesus' Baptism and so John can say that he has seen and can testify. What can you say that you have seen and can testify to about Jesus?

Someone or a chain of events and apparent coincidences identified Jesus to you and me, Think about how Jesus came into your life so that you had to respond. Who or what revealed that love to you? Whatever it was it would have been particular to you ~ something that had an impact on you but not necessarily anyone else experiencing the situation with you or something similar in their own lives. Maybe you sharing what you experienced with them allowed the Spirit to reveal Jesus to them so they could follow too.

When you and I identify the presence of Jesus to someone the Spirit works in them to enable a wonderful awakening ~ a desire in that person to learn more and know Jesus for themselves. We don't always see it but when we do it is amazing. Whenever it occurs, after the seeds have been sown, we have to let that person develop in the way God requires of them as they are not a clone of the one who sows the seeds.

The Gospel this morning shows us what letting go is about very clearly; when people heard what John was saying they turned from John and went with Jesus ~ John had to let go! ~ Any reward for John was in knowing that they would receive grace for themselves ~ John effectively ministered to make himself redundant, that was his reward, knowing that in passing his faith he continued to be a follower too.

It can be humbling, humiliating and even feel rejecting when you have walked with someone and shown them the way ~ when they choose the pathway God has prepared for them and the pace God sets for them. But remember God doesn't ask us to be possessive, He asks us to be permissive ~ trusting that when given permission to look and follow others will find Christ and our reward is being part of the

Knowing Jesus ~ making Him known.

Ministry Musings

Today we consider how God transforms and equips us. From the preparation of knowing each of us at creation, in the womb, through to our coming to faith and seeking to know Him more and being obedient to His being the centre of our lives ~ God is there, preparing and equipping.

It sometimes takes a lifetime to accept the equipping that God gives us. We may be in a church situation that does not readily expect to welcome the fruits and gifts of the Spirit, or they may have had a bad press and left us sceptical and in need of healing. Or the teaching we have received leaves us believing that miracles and signs and wonders have their place in the Bible but have no relevance in 2017. Neither are accurate reflections of the Truth revealed in our Scripture!

Listen carefully to our readings today, Isaiah recognises that "before he was born the Lord called" him but that did not prevent Isaiah feeling that he had failed in what he was called to do even though he had remained faithful! God asks BIG and does not apologise for it! The asking big puts you and me out of our comfort zones but God equips us for all He asks of us ~ we have to chose to accept that we are equipped even when we don't feel that we are ~ we have to remain faithful.

Paul, writing to the church in Corinth speaks of always giving thanks for them and how they have been enriched in every way. He tells them that they do not lack any spiritual gift as they wait for Jesus to be revealed again. He will keep each of us firm to the end because God is faithful and we are called into fellowship with Jesus Christ, to live and work in His name.

Have you ever noticed before the demands of being called? They are apparent in John's account of John the Baptist testifying about Jesus and Jesus calling the first disciples. The Baptist dares to share what he experienced at Jesus' Baptism ~ making himself vulnerable and open to ridicule ~ but he stood firm pointing his own disciples to follow Jesus instead. Those disciples went to see where Jesus was staying without hesitation and chose to stay with Him, they also started to bring others into Jesus presence and Jesus recognising their true potential ~ why else would He change Simon's name to Cephas which translated is Peter and means rock?

What is your name in Christ? When we interviewed our new Headteacher one of the faith questions was what Biblical character would their faith referee see them as and why? That is the question I challenge you to explore this week ~ the character doesn't have to be the same sex as you ~ it is the characteristic not the gender that is important ~ Maybe you were Baptised with a Biblical name that expresses your character well but maybe you are gifted with different characteristics in your calling. Discover what they are and you will know more of Jesus in your life.

~ Knowing Jesus, Making Him Known ~

15th January 2017

Isaiah 49:1-7
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
John 1:29-42

OT page 689
NT page 162
NT page 88

Isaiah knows that he is a normal or ordinary God fearing man ~ he knows too that all the people that know him know exactly the same thing ~ he is a working man and nothing special. Nothing special, that is, except God has gifted him with a task to fulfil for Him. That task is to bring hope and light to God's people through the Gift of prophecy. Prophetic ministry is not comfortable ~ the prophet does not get to tell the people what they want to hear but what they need to hear and importantly what God knows that they need to hear!

Isaiah is very honest and open with the people ~ he asks them to listen to him, not because he is some sort of oracle but because he is ordinary yet realises that the Lord has called him from his very creation in the womb to be a messenger for Him. A messenger with a very important message ~ a message that will glorify the Lord.

Isaiah never stops marvelling of the fact that God has given him this task even though he is an ordinary labouring man and he often feels despondent ~ almost depressed ~ that he is labouring in vain. Isaiah's concerns over his ability do not stop him from going on ~ remaining steadfast to what he believes God asks of him.

The message that Isaiah is charged to deliver is that the Lord will redeem Israel and will bring Jacob back to Him. That is that all who have lost sight of God as Father and now only know Him as their distant creator and authority figure will have the opportunity to recognise Him father ~ Abba once more. Isaiah will lead the way to this opportunity as God makes him a light for the nations to follow so that the opportunity ~ the salvation that God offers all ~ Jesus Christ ~ may reach the ends of the earth.

This morning, consider this ~ if Isaiah was the light of the nations ~ and we are the current outworking of those nations ~ then we too have the light of hope passed to us. ~ Everyone of us who recognise Jesus as Christ and Lord and receives salvation ~ in turn carries His light of Hope to offer others, because, just like Isaiah we have been chosen by the Lord, who is faithful. The Holy One of Israel, has chosen us too!

Paul recognised that reality of Calling ~ he opens his first epistle to the church in Corinth with the greeting

"Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus,"

You and I don't begin our letters or emails in that sort of way today but we don't sign them off that way very often either. The closest we might get is something like *"Yours in Christ"* but how do you feel about yourself and your relationship with God. Can you think of your relationship in terms of

"(your name), called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus,"

As a Christian you should be able to and, when you can, it will effect everything that you think and do!

Paul recognises calling and equipping in all who receive Jesus as Lord and gives thanks for each of them because of the grace they are given and enriched by. That grace can be recognised in the fruits and gifts of the Spirit ~ gifts that enable believers to speak and pray, to show hospitality and empathy, to offer healing and comfort or to challenge each other in their faith journey so that each is encouraged to remain guiltless; all of the gifts to be used to God's Glory until the revealing of Jesus Christ ~ whenever that happens ~ as God has promised it will. God is faithful and requires faithfulness in us.

The Calling to recognise, follow and then identify Jesus to others is illustrated for us in our Gospel reading in John today in the account of John the Baptist not only making the way clear for Jesus but, at the same time, actively pointing Jesus out to those who were with him and listening to his teachings. As soon as John sees Jesus coming towards him he declares

'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said "A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me". I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptising with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.'

Consider that last sentence ~ John tells his listeners and followers very simply that he had not known Jesus either ~ he knew there was one promised by God and he came teaching that but he, like everyone else, had to recognise the presence of God in Jesus ~ and had to recognise that He was the one God had sent ~ not just carry on waiting for God's promise to be fulfilled.

God blessed John the Baptist by revealing the truth to him when Jesus