

## HOLY TRINITY SUNNINGDALE

Bible Readings: Colossians 1:1-14

Luke 4:14-22

Date: 22 November 2015

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We come this morning to the end of our series of sermons looking afresh at our vision – to live by faith, to be known by love, to be a voice of hope.

Under these three headings, we have looked at prayer and the bible, at generosity and giving, at love, at the prophetic, and at the power of invitation.

Today we come to the end of our series and ask ourselves the two questions: So What? What now?

I shall say a little about each of these questions in turn.

### **So what?**

What difference does any of this stuff actually make?

There is something about character which says a huge amount about the person, the work they do, the groups they belong to and life they live.

Ten days ago I met up with my son, Tim, in Basingstoke to go to see the new James Bond film, Spectre.

We were really excited to see the town centre – in fact Tim now calls it Amazingstoke! If you don't know it, it might be worth a visit.

The film moves on from where we had got to with Skyfall. It reveals a lot about a secret agent, about one licensed to kill and about one who finds it difficult to form and sustain long-term relationships.

We see something of the work of MI5 as the roles of M and Q are developed a bit further. And we see the tensions latent at times and conspicuous at times in national government and international negotiations.

Spectre is a very good film and if you haven't seen it yet, I warmly commend it to you.

But I want to draw out of it the idea that seeing the person of James Bond leads us to all sorts of other trains of thought and conclusions.

Would the same be said of us in terms of our character as Christians, as members of HTS?

Would people see in us

- a passion for prayer
- a commitment to learn more from the bible
- a generosity and a giving which makes it clear where our priorities lie and our hearts are rooted
- a love which marks all our dealings with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours

- a prophetic voice unafraid of speaking up about the issues of the day
- a desire to make the very best use of power of invitation

In other words are there aspects of our characters, aspects of who we are (as individuals and as church family), which set people thinking and which might even one day draw them to the same place of trust and confidence in Jesus Christ?

These past few weeks we have been teaching lessons for all of the classes at our Church Primary School here in church. We have had 45 mins to an hour with each of them, explaining about the Holy Trinity.

Now obviously we start with the fact that it's the name of their school (they all wear the logo on their jumpers) and it's also the name of the church connected with their school.

But what does it mean? We explain that it is a way of understanding and describing God:

God who is Father, the creator and sustainer of all that exists;

God the Son, who lived to show us how to live and who died for the sins of the world;

God the Holy Spirit, who after Jesus returned to be with his Father in heaven, was sent to be with us for ever and for always. A helper to live inside us and to change us to make us more like Jesus.

To help the children we talk about water, steam and ice as all being water in its different forms. And we talk about a Mars Bar or a Twix as having three essential elements.

Even with the little ones we wanted the children to understand that being part of something with "Holy Trinity" in the title meant something special, marked us out as different from others who might go to a different school that wasn't a school linked so closely with a church and helped us to see God all around us and everywhere not just on our uniforms, on our book bags and on our rucksacks.

And of course, when the children leave Holy Trinity School, as they leave Year 6, we give them a book to remember us by and hopefully to begin to live by. We give them a copy of the Bible, the God story, the love story, the story of hope, the story which Christians believe ultimately and profoundly makes sense of the world we are living in.

The stuff we believe about God the Holy Trinity should make a difference to the way we live. If it doesn't we have a problem – not with the stuff, which God has given us and is all we need, but we have a problem with us and with our not engaging with the stuff properly.

Last weekend, Kathryn and I went to Bristol. We had been invited to spend a day with the wives of those who were students at Trinity College. One of these wives, of course, is our daughter, Zoe. But the others we were meeting for the first time.

We had been asked to speak about, teach about, spiritual gifts. And we did ... in the context that these had been

given by God for the up-building of his church. We saw how that ancient prayer could come to be.

We saw that spiritual gifts were given to help the church to be all that God wanted and needed it to be. We said that

- Christians are those who are to “be Jesus” to those around them: family, friends, colleagues, neighbours.
- Christians are to be the body of Christ.

And we anchored this teaching in the ancient saying of St Teresa of Avila. Teresa was born to a great Spanish family in March 1515, and was both talented and beautiful. She joined the local Carmelite Convent at the age of 21yrs. One of her very famous saying was this:

*Christ has no body now on earth but yours,  
no hands but yours, no feet but yours,  
yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion is to look out to the earth,  
yours are the feet by which He is to go about doing good  
and yours are the hands by which He is to bless us now.*

So the church family, Christians, are to be God’s special agents in the world in which we live, demonstrating and embodying worship and praise of our heavenly Father and bringing his love to those around us. Being people of faith love and hope, rooted in prayer in the bible, in generosity

and giving, in love, in the prophetic, and in the power of invitation.

People know who James Bond is. They know the organisation he works for and the kind of people he hangs out with. They know what he stands for. They know how he operates. They know how he resources himself and trains for the job he has been called to do.

Could the same be said for us?

People know who James Bond is.

Do people know us distinctively as followers of Jesus?

They know the organisation he works for and the kind of people he hangs out with.

Are people aware that we are members of HTS (part of the international organisation “Almighty God PLC”)? Do we spend quality time with our Christians friends or could we be better at doing that?

They know what James Bond stands for.

Would our friends and family know that we have certain views about certain things based on the teaching of Jesus in the Bible which may be quite at odds with the prevailing culture of the day or the conversation in the office or the pub.

They know how James Bond operates.

Do people describe us as honest, reliable, trustworthy, punctual, loyal, faithful and good?

They know how James Bond resources himself and trains for the job he has been called to do.

How much of our time do we spend on reading the Bible to learn more about Jesus and deepen our relationship with him? How often do we pray? Are we clear the part that we play in this local church, its ministry and its mission?

This is all the “so what” of the series we have been looking at Sunday by Sunday. It’s about being distinctive and different. It’s about our ability and willingness in standing up and standing out for Jesus.

We have been focusing on these things not just so that we are massively well-informed when we die. We have been focusing on these things so that we can make a contribution to God’ work now, to make a difference to our community and our world, and to offer faith, love and hope to people who are frankly floundering around without much of a clue as to what life is all about.

This leads us to the second question ...

### **What now?**

Next Sunday is Advent Sunday, the official start of the church’s year.

Some of us may have a advent Calendar to mark each and every day as we journey towards Christmas. We open the

door and see the picture or read the verses and/or eat the chocolate.

Can we take time each day to reflect on these things, to ask God to show us what it means for us to be people of faith, love and hope, to be people who believe in God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to be distinctive followers of Jesus who are known as different in our family, with our friends and colleagues and neighbours not in a weird way but in a way that leads to life, truth and hope.

In a world where people are blown up, shot, starving, wandering, homeless and hopeless, we are needed by God like never before.

And the difference we can make, maybe a matter of lifestyle choice which makes people think. Or it may even be a matter of life and death.

People of faith, love and hope are God’s way of speaking to the world he has made. And if you’re up for it, that’s you and it’s me.

Let’s pray ...