

Sermon 24 May 2020 – Revd. Terry Ward-Hall

I thought it was absolutely wonderful to hear the gloria a few minutes ago. Thank you Rob for arranging that. I don't know about you but was surprised how much I've missed singing it since we have been unable to gather together in church, but not surprised at all that Jon didn't record me singing.

Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth – the very same words the angels sang when announcing the birth of Christ to the shepherds. *Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God the Father, we worship you we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.*

Glory.....not the glory, glory Man United or Tottenham Hotspur or whichever team you might support. But God's glory. Our liturgy and hymns overflow with references to God's glory. God's glory incorporates the words I've just spoken: worshipful praise, honour and thanksgiving. There's also a touch of humbleness in there too, we are recognizing something that is so awesome, so beautiful so magnificent at one and the same time.

For some God's glory is seen in naturein a sunset..... in the flight of a bird..... in the birth of a new born baby.....in art it is often shown as a halo of light.

For some, God's glory is found in this, the bible where God's mission is revealed as the restoration of God's original creation which He declared to be 'very good'. And the vehicle of that restoration is love because God is love, evidenced through the ultimate sacrificial act of love seen in Christ's life, death and resurrection.

Last week Jane told the story of the art auction which ended with the words: “The one who has the Son, has everything”. Having the Son includes believing in him and living out our lives accordingly, that is how the Father is glorified.

By praying that he might glorify his Father, Jesus was effectively praying that he might make God known to the world; that he might reveal the reality and inner truth that God is love. Jesus longed for people to understand this and recognize the enduring and reciprocal nature of the love between the Father and Son and humankind. That's me and you.

Jesus is saying that by obediently participating in God's mission of redemption he is glorifying God; the disciples will similarly glorify God by doing what they do to reveal, share and show God's love to everyone after Christ finally leaves them. In other words, to glorify is to reveal the inner reality and truth of another.

Two thousand years on the invitation to glorify God by participating as fully as humanly possible in God's mission remains. The challenge is how can we reveal, share and show God's love in our everyday lives?

For some, this will mean preaching or teaching the good news of Jesus Christ; for others working to preserve and sustain God's created world; for others serving humbly alongside and supporting the elderly or the isolated; for others seeking social justice for the disadvantaged and the enslaved. And of course, the dedication and sometimes sacrificial care for others during Covid-19 speaks volumes. The where, how and who may be different, but the common denominator will be love.

Over the past few weeks we have been progressing through chapters 14 - 17 in John's gospel which is often called Jesus' farewell discourse and is set during the last supper. Although we read just the first 11 verses, the whole of chapter 17 is a prayer which is spoken aloud to the disciples and it reiterates not only Jesus' relationship with Father God, but models what our own should be like. And

the key word here, is relationship.

It is often said that Christianity is not a religion, but a relationship and that really is what is revealed by this prayer. Jesus prayed that the world would see in his death the depth and integrity of his love; and that in seeing the truth of the loving relationship between Jesus and his Father we in turn would enter into that same loving relationship.

The final words spoken by Jesus in today's reading make this clear:

Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

The words were spoken to the disciples, but if we follow Jesus, if we have the loving relationship with him that I've been talking about, then the ripple of Jesus' prayer unites us with the original disciples, being as one with the Father.

Last week Jane concluded with the invitation to believe the truth; our challenge is to live it out. Live it out to the glory of God.