

#10. How? The Indwelling of the Spirit (26/11/23, Richard Saint)

Reading: John 7:37-39 & Acts 2:1-4

1. Over the course of this series, we have explored the following topics as we have considered what it looks like to fulfil God's purpose for God's people of becoming more like Jesus. Which have you found most challenging / encouraging / inspiring and why? Take some time to share with each other about the series.
 - a) Christlike in service
 - b) Christlike in His love
 - c) Christlike in His commitment & generosity
 - d) Christlike in His patient endurance
 - e) Christlike in temptation
 - f) Christlike in His incarnational mission
 - g) Christlike in His politics
 - h) Christlike in His focus

2. As we arrive at the end of the series you might be feeling overwhelmed by the challenge. You are not alone in feeling like this. Christians across the centuries have been faced by the same challenge.
 - a) Richard said, "God's purpose for God's people is overwhelming, and it should be. Living a life like Jesus is not the easy route, it isn't the path of least resistance, it isn't the simple option. The Bible has never claimed that it is or ever would be such."
 - i. What do you think of that statement?
 - ii.

3. The good news, we do not do this alone, God has provided for us. Richard used two illustrations to show how God has provided a way for us to live a life like Jesus.
 - a) Kipper the God – without breath filling up a beach ball it is simply a colourful but useless plasticky think lying on the floor. But with breath inside it, it becomes the fattest, shiniest, roundest, bounciest ball you will ever see.
 - b) Archbishop William Temple – "It is no good giving me a play like Hamlet or King Lear and telling me to write a play like that. Shakespeare could do it – I can't. And it is no good showing me a life like the life of Jesus and telling me to live a life like that. Jesus could do it – I can't. But if the genius of Shakespeare could come and live in me, then I could write plays like this. And if the Spirit could come into me, then I could live a life like His."
 - i. Which illustration resonated with you?
 - ii.

4. Romans 8:11 states, "if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you."
 - a) How does it feel to know that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead resides in you?
 - b) What difference does it make to how you see the challenge of becoming more like Jesus?
 - c)

5. In John 7:37-39 Jesus is speaking at the Festival of Tabernacles and promises to send the Spirit to all believers. He uses the imagery of being thirsty and of that thirst being satisfied by the Spirit.
 - a) In what areas of your life do you need to receive a refreshing through the thirst-quenching Spirit?

6. This promise of Jesus to send His Spirit was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) when his first followers received the Spirit and were changed as they allowed the Spirit to shape, mould, and direct them.
 - a) Read the passage and picture the scene.
 - b) It is the same Spirit that God sends to believers today.
 - c) Spend some time in prayer for each other asking for a renewal of the work of the Spirit in your lives.

7. To finish, Richard said, "Becoming more like Christ is not the easy route, it isn't the path of least resistance, it isn't the simple option, it is a challenge, and it can seem overwhelming, but it brings a depth of life and a life of abundance that can be found nowhere else. A life that the Spirit of God can empower us to reach for."
 - a) Pray for each other that you would be filled to overflowing with the Spirit.
 - b) Read through once again the topics we have been looking at. Encourage each other to identify one or two that you are thirsty to take up the challenge of and pray for the Spirit to help you.

#9. Christlike in his Focus/Remembrance (12/11/23, Keith Brindle)

Reading: John 1:1-13

- 1) How did you find the Act of Remembrance at St James?
 - a. What worked/didn't work/scratched your itch/didn't scratch your itch?
- 2) How do we best honour the dead of past and present conflicts, in a way that does not either glorify or dismiss the horrors of war, whilst also bringing glory to God?
- 3) Review the last 48 hrs. What have you been focussing on? Recognise and reflect upon what you have given attention and time to over the last 48hrs.
- 4) Which extreme do you tend towards; being too heavenly focussed or to earthly focussed?
 - a. What are the downsides, for individuals and Christian communities, of the focus you tend toward?
 - b. What are the upsides, for individuals and Christian communities, of the focus you tend toward?
- 5) Can you list and reflect upon the words, parables and actions of Jesus that are:
 - a. More heavenly focussed
 - b. More earthly focussed

(It might be useful to have individuals flick through 1 of the 4 gospels).

- 6) Discuss whether you think it is right to say that Jesus' focus was both on the now and the not yet; this life and the next?
- 7) When Jesus went to pray he did not seek a bit of escapism, but a bit of reality.
 - a. What is the nature of the reality that Jesus sought in prayer?
 - b. How do you seek such reality when you pray?
- 8) Read 2 Corinthians 4:18. How can we bring the real, important, seen, but temporary, things of the last 48hrs (Q3) into the reality of the unseen and eternal? (Or how do we both 'live in the now and live for the not yet'.

#8. Christlike in his Mission (05/11/23, Katie Pratt)

Reading: John 20:19-23, 5 Marks of Mission

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/mtag-the-5-marks-of-mission.pdf>

- 1) Either consciously, or more often unconsciously, everyone has a Mission Statement of sorts. What do you think are some of the common Mission Statements of our neighbours and our community?
- 2) If you had, like Coca Cola or Microsoft, a personal Mission Statement, what would it be?
- 3) What bits of Scripture would you refer to create Jesus' Mission Statement?
- 4) What do you see are the pros and cons of having a Mission Statement?
- 5) 1st Mark of Mission; TELL, to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
 - a. Discuss the Archbishop's quote, "We aren't committed to evangelism because we are scared the church is dying. We don't make known his love because we want to look successful. We announce what God has done in Christ because we are compelled by his love. The only way anyone knows of God's love is because someone tells them and shows them."
 - b. As most people in our community don't go to church how do we tell them about Jesus' love for them?
- 6) 2nd Mark of Mission: TEACH, to teach, baptise and nurture new believers
 - a. How do you best 'learn' as a follower of Jesus? (Sermons, CGs, discussions, examples, experience)
 - b. For the majority of our community who don't go to church, where are they 'learning' about who God is? What are they 'learning'?
- 7) 3rd Mark of Mission: TEND, to respond to human need by loving service.
 - a. From the Archbishop's quote above, 'The only way anyone knows of God's love is because someone tells them and **shows them.**' When does our loving service show others God's love.
 - b. Katie spoke of mission being achieved one-person-at-a-time? Discuss the value of this approach?
- 8) 4th Mark of Mission: TRANSFORM, to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation?
 - a. Last Sunday Keith suggested that sometimes injustices are systemic. Discuss how transforming such injustices may be impacted by approaching mission one-person-at-a-time?
- 9) 5th Mark of Mission: TREASURE, to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.
 - a. Matthew 10:29 'even the sparrows...' reminds us that all of creation, not just humanity, fall's within God's care and love. How does this perspective, impact how we care for His creation and how we order of life?
 - b. Many would argue that climate change is the most catastrophic, challenging and unjust of systemic injustices. What does a Christlike missional response to such an injustice look like?
- 10) A personal question/challenge: Who, in the coming days, are you going to tell and show God's love to?

#7. Christlike in his Politics (29/10/23, Keith Brindle)

Reading: Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 4:14-21

- 1) What do you understand by the words 'politics' and 'political'? Find some definitions and discuss them.
- 2) Was Jesus political? How would you defend your position on this from the Gospels?
- 3) What do you think are the laws that define the Kingdom of God?
- 4) Who are the 'least' in our community/country?
- 5) When/how do our systems and structures support the 'least' in our country?
- 6) When/how do our systems and structures fail the 'least' in our country?
- 7) Is doing good works in our local community enough? Explain your argument?
 - a. Are there any circumstance in which we could ever be propping up or colluding with a broken or unjust system by just focussing on our local good works?
- 8) How do will you weigh up the laws of the Kingdom of God against the manifesto pledges that will be made by the major political parties in the run up to the next election?
- 9) What does it mean to you to vote in such a way that the poor are blessed, and the 'least' are prioritised?
- 10) Comparing the two parables Keith told can you identify and discuss where the systemic and political injustices lay?
 - a. What could a Christ-like response to such injustices look like?
- 11) Is it even right to be addressing these political questions within the context of our Christian faith?

#6. Christlike in Handling Temptation (22/10/23, Mike Wilmott)

Reading: Luke 4:1-13

- 1) Some people may see temptation as simply a bit of fun over whether to eat an extra chocolate or have another slice of cake.
 - How seriously should we take temptation? Why?
 - How seriously did Jesus take it?
- 2) Why do you think the first temptation Jesus faces related to food? (Luke 4 v 1-4)
 - Do you know what weaknesses might leave you open to temptation?
 - Why is it important to face up to them?
- 3) What do you turn to when facing temptation?
 - What did Jesus turn to?
 - Can the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments still be relevant and helpful to us thousands of years after they were written?
- 4) Jesus resisted the temptation offered to take a short-cut to be the ruler of the world. (Luke 4 v 5-8)
 - Why?
 - Are there things other than God that we are in danger of worshipping, of putting first before God?
 - What can the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12 13-21) teach us?
 - How can we be generous towards God in our own lives?
- 5) Why do you think Jesus refuses the temptation for a dramatic miracle at The Temple but then carries out many miracles in his subsequent ministry?
 - What is the purpose of his subsequent miracles? How are they different from the one suggested by the Tempter?
- 6) At the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus takes his three closest friends with him as he wrestles with the temptation to avoid the agony of the cross. (Matthew 26 36-46)
 - How important is it to have friends that we can turn to for support when facing times of trial and temptation?
 - What is wrong with self-reliance?
- 7) Whilst Jesus never succumbed to temptation, even one of his closest disciples (Peter) failed to publicly acknowledge him. (Luke 22 v31-34; 54-62)
 - Does failure to resist temptation cut us off from God?
 - How can we seek to restore any fractured relationship?
 - How important is forgiveness?
- 8) As Christians, we are called to live in community, meeting together as church.
 - Can temptation be an issue for churches as well as individuals?
 - Can you think of potential examples?
 - How can we guard against it?
- 9) From what you have heard and read, what three things can help us to handle temptation and become more Christ-like?

#5. Christlike in His Patient Endurance (08/10/23, Richard Saint)

Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:10

1. What do the words patient endurance bring to your mind?
2. What do you think the Bible says about suffering?
3. Richard said, “one of the most reassuring things the Bible has to say about suffering is that it is real. God’s word does not pretend suffering is anything other than painful”.
 - a. Do you find that reassuring? Why or why not?
4. Christ suffered – read Matthew 26:36-46
 - a. What strikes you about Jesus’ suffering and its depth?
 - b. (God doesn’t have a theoretical knowledge of suffering – he has a lived experience of deep suffering)
5. How could Jesus respond to suffering with patient endurance and entrusting himself to God [yet not what I want but what you want]?
6. Read 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:10 (slowly) maybe even twice.
 - a. Before we continue, what strikes you about this passage? What stands out – images, words, phrases...?
7. In this passage, Paul is using 4 different analogies to explain one concept – the difference between life on earth, now, and life in heaven, the future.
 - a. This life, this body, this time is temporary – a tent (5:1a)
 - b. Future life, body and time is permanent – a building (5:1b)
 - i. What does the use of “tent” and “building” bring to mind or highlight about the differences of this life and our future life? (pictures included below to help).
8. Paul describes our suffering now as “a slight momentary affliction” (5:17) – what do you think of this phrase (perhaps you think Paul is not taking it seriously)?
 - a. In the same verse, Paul then uses the phrase, “the eternal weight of glory beyond all measure” to describe our future “building”. Paul is not minimising our current suffering but placing it within a larger perspective – does this help?
 - b. Richard used the image of a tennis ball, a cup, and a swimming pool to explain how suffering can be taken seriously and yet still be placed in a wider perspective – how might you explain this concept to someone or indeed to yourself?
9. Paul writes, “because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.”
 - a. To think about what this looks like, Richard challenged the congregation to picture Jesus on the cross and think about what he could see with his eyes and contrast that with what he could see with his spirit. You might like to try this as a group.
10. Paul wrote, “He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee”.
 - a. Does this phrase, and what we have been thinking about this session, give you confidence in God to face suffering with patient endurance? What else might help?
11. Pray with each other for your own situations.



#4. Christlike in His Generosity (01/10/23, Keith Brindle)

Reading: Matthew Matt 14:13-21; (Mk 6:32-44, Lk 9:10-17); also John 6:1-14, Matt 15:29-39 (Mk 8:1-10)

1. The part of Jesus that was fully human would likely have been tired, hungry and in need of space, and yet he was still compassionate and generous. What situations can make you less compassionate and generous towards others/yourself?
2. Keith spoke of Jesus' compassion and love for the crowd (and for us all) being rooted in the compassion and love He had received from His Father (John 15:9). Keith said, 'The single most generous thing you will ever do is allow yourself to receive the love that God has for you. And for some it will also be the most vulnerable and hardest things to do. Especially those of who have been hurt, betrayed, or left wanting.'
 - a. This week/month what could you do daily to remind yourself of the generosity, compassion and love that the Father has for you? (Suggestion: Start each day, for 5 mins, reading and praying on verses such as Psalm 86:15, 1Lamentations 3:22-23, 1 John 4:9-10, Ephesians 3:18-19, Psalm 36:7)
 - b. Read 1 John 4:7-8, 'Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love.' This week/month what could you daily set out to do that to share the love you have received from the God with others in either thought (prayer), word or deed?
3. Is there anyone I fear, dislike, disown, criticise, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it? (Question 19, from J Wesley's 21 Questions)
4. Before miraculously multiplying the quantity of food, Jesus gave thanks. (Matt 14:19, 15:36). Keith said in his sermon that giving thanks routinely reminds us of the generosity of God. (1 Chronicles 16:34, Psalm 63:3)
 - a. Why do you think Jesus gave thanks *before* his miracle?
 - b. Why do you think he said it out loud in public for all to hear?
 - c. Where/when do you give thanks to God? How can giving thanks become a routine and public part of your discipleship?
5. Read 14:19. Note that *takes* the bread, *gives thanks*, *breaks* the bread and then *shares* it with his disciples to distribute. Matthew in his telling of this event, is alluding to the last super. Why do you think he may be doing this?
6. Being generous, and tithing (giving 10% of your earnings), is not about quantity (how much you have to give) but about the inclination of your heart towards God's mission, the flourishing of others, and the things that break God's heart that we are called to bring God's love and truth into. It's about your motivation and your willingness to give from what you have. Where are you at with your motivation, your generosity, and your tithing to God's mission and the flourishing of others.
7. 'Fake it, until you make it' is how Keith ended his sermon. Being generous even when you are not feeling generous. How does this resonate with you?

The questions below are from the end of Keith's sermon, and for private use, but you may want to share them again with your CG.

Finally, In the same way that John Wesley is direct and to the point in his the 21 questions he daily asked himself, I am going to end this with a slide of 8 direct questions. I'm going to also be handing these questions out as you leave. The answer to the last question may well be yourself.

1. In what way(s) are you most generous?
2. In what way(s) are you least generous?
3. How are you generous to yourself?
4. How are you not generous to yourself?
5. How are you generous to others?
6. How are you not generous to others?
7. Are you generous in your thoughts, in the disposition of your heart, toward yourself and toward others? In what ways?
8. Who do you need to be generous to this week that you currently feel uncaring or heartless toward?

#3. Christlike in His Love (24/09/23, Richard Saint)

Reading: John 15:9-17

The depth of Love

Read John 15:9-17

1. What does it mean to you to “be loving”?
 - a. Think of someone who has shown you love and share what it was about what they did that demonstrated it.
2. Richard said, “loving like Jesus loves, loving like God loves, is not easy.”
 - a. Do you agree? Why do you think this is the case?
3. Read John 15:13; John 3:16; Ephesians 5:1-2
 - a. What do these passages show us about God’s definition and depiction of love?
 - b. Richard said, “This definition of love is not based on romance, emotions, feelings, physicality, attraction, or chemistry”
 - i. If this is accurate, what do you think it is based on then? [a choice]
4. John Stott wrote, “we are urged to be Like Christ in his death, to love with self-giving Calvary love”
 - a. What do you think this means?

Calvary Love

Richard introduced two aspects of calvary love – active & radical

5. Re-read Ephesians 5:1-2. We are told to “walk in love” – what does this phrase bring to your mind about what Calvary love should be?
6. Read James 2:15-17
 - a. What does this passage tell us about active love?
7. Calvary love is radical, it is an emptying of yourself as Jesus emptied himself on the cross. This is a big concept and challenge.
 - a. Spend a few moments thinking about what loving like this might mean for you. You can share with your group if you would like.

The Choice

Richard said, “There is a risk of loving with calvary love – it makes us intensely vulnerable”. “Jesus, in his love made himself vulnerable even to death”. “Calvary love gives a choice to those who are being shown love – they can choose to accept or reject”.

8. This choice is shown in the “If” of the John 15 passage. The “If” does not mean that God’s love starts and stops but that we have the choice to walk in God’s love or not.
 - a. To illustrate this, Richard used the image of a bright spotlight shining onto a dark stage and a performer having the choice to step into the light or not. The light does not waver, but the choice remains with the performer. What do you think of this illustration? What works what doesn’t? How would you describe the “If”?

Final questions

9. How easy do you find it to abide / remain in the light of God’s love?
10. How easy do you find it to love others with a calvary love?

Finish by praying for each other to know God’s love and to be able to show this love to others (perhaps praying into the ideas that came out of Question 7a)

Reading: John 13:1-17

The questions are broken down into reflecting on some of the points that were raised in the sermon. There are a lot of questions here – don't feel the need to go through each of them chronologically, but perhaps look at the points that struck you as particularly relevant to where you are at this time and work through the questions under those headings.

Introduction

At the end of each service in church, whoever is leading invites us to:

'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord'

1. What does this imply about where our service of God is focused?
2. Do you see everyday tasks as part of our service offered to God?
3. What does Paul say in Colossians 3.17?
4. Where do you think your focus of service lies? What help do you need to help you in your service?

Motivation

In Chapter 13, we see Jesus setting out on the last leg of his journey of service, knowing how it was going to end:

5. What motivates Jesus to firstly wash his disciples' feet, and then to follow through with his self-sacrifice? (v1)
6. The author of the book of Hebrews encourages us *'to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God' (Hebrews 12 v 2)*. Do we see service as a joy, motivated by love, or a duty? Can our attitude to service be transformed if we model the approach Jesus showed?

Inclusion

7. Jesus washes the feet of all his disciples, even Judas, who he knows will betray him within a few hours. What does this say to us about the grace of God?
8. How easy is it to fall into the culture around us of 'cancelling' those whose views we may disagree with/disinviting them/excluding them. Do we live up to the words on the noticeboard outside our church 'All are welcome'? Or are there people we wouldn't see as welcome?

Listening

9. John Stott, a leading Christian theologian, and Chaplain to the late Queen, who died a few years ago) said this *'Every true disciple is a listener – listening to God and to our fellow human beings'*. Why is this dual listening important? How do we get the balance right between the two?
10. Throughout the Gospels, the disciples seem not to listen to Jesus - they don't want to hear talk about Jesus offering himself up to death, and Peter initially refuses to have his feet washed. By contrast, Jesus spends a lot of his time saying those of you with ears to hear should listen. Why is it so hard to listen to Jesus – then and now?
11. Are there people that we aren't listening to that we should be listening to?

Action

Jesus demonstrates what service and faithful obedience to God looks like in practice. Firstly, by humbling himself, laying aside his clothes, and washing the feet of the disciples. (A far cry from the role the devil offers him as ruler of all the Kingdoms of the world in Matthew 4, v 5). He then follows through with laying aside his outer garments again and

being led to the ultimate sacrifice of death on a cross, setting us free and enabling us to be able to follow him by providing us with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

12. If listening to God and our fellow human beings is important, how important is it to act on what we hear?

13. Acts Chapter 10 recounts the story of Peter and Cornelius, the Roman Centurion. Unlike in the Gospels, Peter listens to God, listens to his non-Jewish fellow human beings (who he wouldn't normally associate with), and at the end, listens to the actions of the Holy Spirit. The result is that Cornelius and his household are brought to faith, and Peter's understanding of the Kingdom of God is expanded by his obedience to what he hears. Who gains when we act on what we hear – by doing practical service, and not just listening?

Blessings

In John 13 v 17, Jesus says *'Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them'*.

14. How does service bless you?

15. Do you agree that worship encompasses service? If so, do we find our meaning and purpose in serving God and serving others? Does this set us free, if so, from what? Does this provide any insights into what life in all its fullness is all about?

#1. God's Purpose for God's People (03/09/23, Richard Saint)

Reading: Romans 8:28-30; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 1 John 3:1-2

1. What places in our lives do we or others find purpose?
 - a. What are the benefits and pitfalls from finding our purpose in these things?
2. Richard introduced in the talk the meme, "Be like Bill" as representing a shallowness of modern thinking on purpose and how to live and how this might leave us unfulfilled as individuals and also as society. Do you agree / disagree and why?
3. In John Stott's final address, he wrote, "Granted that we have been converted, granted that we have been saved and received new life in Jesus Christ, what comes next? What is God's purpose for His people?"
 - a. John Stott proposes the answer, "God wants His people to become like Christ. Christlikeness is the will of God for the people of God"
 - b. What do you think about this answer? What do you like? What do you not like? Why might this be?
4. John Stott's proposed answer of "Christlikeness" is based on three passages from Scripture that provide three perspectives of God's purpose set in the past, present, and future:
5. Read Romans 8:28-30
 - a. Although it is not the focus of the passage, the word "predestined" is used which can lead to lots of complicated issues such as, "what about free will?", "is it determined before we are born whether we will accept Christ or not?"
 - i. My very brief thoughts for now: an important part of the passage which gives context to predestination is "*those he foreknew*". God, unlike us, resides outside of linear time – He can see all of time at once. This means that God can know our future decisions whilst we retain our freewill in making those decisions. God has not, prior to our birth, *determined* whether we will accept him or not, rather he *knows* whether we will of our own freewill choose him. Therefore, the passage can say, "those whom he foreknew he also predestined". The people that will choose him are effectively then predestined, by their choosing, to be conformed to the image of Christ.
 - ii. (This is a far larger topic but please do discuss my thoughts further if you would like to)
 - b. What do you think about God's purpose for His people being founded from the very start of creation?
 - c. Spend some time praising God for what Jesus accomplished for us with his life, death, and resurrection – defeating sin and death and restoring in us the image of God.
6. Read 2 Corinthians 3:17-18
 - a. How are we transformed on a day-to-day basis into the same image of Christ?
 - b. The final talk in this series is "How do we become more like Jesus?" and there is a massive clue in this passage about the answer. Can you spot it?
 - i. "This comes from the Lord, the Spirit"
 - ii. This is so important as without this, we look at the purpose "Christlikeness" and think, "well that is a standard I am never going to reach" and feel defeated before we have even begun.
 - iii. We will look at this more in Talk 10 but why is it important that it comes from the Spirit and not from our own strength?
7. Read 1 John 3:1-2
 - a. What are your thoughts about your / the world's future? (Big question I know)
 - b. Whatever our plans, whether our future appears hopeful or bleak, God's purpose remains. We remain God's children in his care. Does this make a difference as we look ahead?
8. The challenge of this series is a big one, "don't be like Bill, instead there is a depth of life that cannot be found anywhere else – be like Jesus"
 - a. What are your final thoughts as we embark on this journey? Pray together and ask God to guide you, inspire you, and empower you as we journey together.