

Weekly Bible Study for Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

Advent #4 Love John 14: 15-24 by Norman Bonnett w/c Sunday 20th December 2020

Please read the passage over and think – and perhaps note down- before you read on what you immediately pick up on from these verses.

When I started my teaching career I was like most beginners; concerned about discipline. My first school was very strong in “stick and carrot” ways of gaining authority; a system that I learnt in time was not for me. I needed an atmosphere built on relationships, on respect, on love. When it came it was pure joy for us all, especially the children.

I guess that the word “love” must be the most overworked word in our language. We use it all the time: for relationships between a man and a woman, between family members, for friendships, for the way we feel about performers, places and food or activities that we enjoy. Here we are talking about the most vital love known to mankind – the love we find in Jesus; a love known to the Greeks as agapé.

For John, as we read his gospel and his letters, we discover that love is his favourite theme and here in this passage he speaks of the obedience that is born of our love for Jesus especially as we recognise the great sacrifice He made at Calvary (John 3:16).

It is not easy to believe that the Son of God gave Himself at the cross to bear the sins of sinners such as you and me.

Many verses in scripture tell of this truth. My favourite, as I have used before in these pages is 1 Peter 3: verses 17 and 18: “For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit”.

Q. You may have your own verse(s) that illuminate this truth for you. Share it with someone – and yes, even with me!

I rejoice in that wonderful hymn of Charles Wesley that wrestles with this fundamental Christian truth “How can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour’s blood, died he for me (#345 in our Singing the Faith books) and the message resounds throughout the hymn as it rejoices in the natural outcome of believing “no condemnation now I dread” with the emphasis on “no”.

Q. Think back to the time when you accepted this for the first time, when you really grasped this truth and what it meant to you, perhaps you still doubt that it really is true -that somehow you are not good enough, the point is that none of us are – but He is. As an encouragement to others, share your experience.

All of us will have had the experience of being in relationships where there is palpable love. It is as verse 23 says: “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them”. A relationship which brings obedience, a desire to please, a cooperative spirit and a joy that such a relationship exists is true love indeed. Here we are faced with the personification of love in Jesus. We are called into the experiences of sharing in that perfect love.

Q. The Trinity (our shorthand for describing Father, Son and Spirit) is presented throughout scripture and especially here in this passage as a picture of perfect, deep, sacrificial and obedient love. How do you feel about the invitation to join in with this divine love? Have you accepted the invitation?

I can bear witness to that experience in my own life, to rejoice in my relationship with the Son of God bringing an experience of that love that knows no limits. Yours in His service, Norman.