

Weekly Bible Study for Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

Discipleship #1 Who are you following? Luke 9:18-36 by Diana Middleditch January 2021

Who do you say I am? This might seem an easy question to answer today. But.....

“If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind; day after day he must take up his cross and come with me” My goodness that is a big ask.

Read the passage again slowly and at the end ask yourself two questions:

Q. What is my personal answer to the question: Who am I following?

Q. How might the Transfiguration be connected to my view of “who Jesus is”?

When I was young I wanted to learn to play the piano and my parents made this possible. I soon came to realise that this was something that took daily practise to achieve results. I had to be willing to accept the hard work, the routine and carry it out daily. This was hard and might explain why I do not consider myself a pianist today. There are no short cuts in either being a pianist or in our Christian life. A friend of mine, who is a competent pianist, says that to keep her skill she must play something every day. If she doesn't, the accuracy and coordination are a little less than they should be. This happens to the Christian too. Discipleship is discipline but sweetened with love. His love, not ours. With the love comes the strength to carry the cross each and every day.

Some people are very lucky to have clarity in what they want to do, they know exactly what their vocation is. In Jesus' case, we know that his vocation had been dramatically confirmed at his baptism. Luke has made it clear that it stretched way back beyond that, so that already at the age of 12 he was exploring, not whether he had such a calling, but what it might mean.

Part of that calling meant that Jesus would have to engage in a strange public career, without starting off by saying “I'm the Messiah.” Jesus was known as a prophet and some people tried to identify him with Elijah, they believed that Jesus was behaving like someone through whom some great act of God was about to take place. But Jesus was more than this, Jesus was causing God's kingdom to appear before their eyes and was setting in motion the events through which it would be established. Sooner or later he would have to put the question to his disciples. Their own identity had come to depend on his, and there was only one answer they could give: “You're the Messiah, God's anointed son.”

There are no half measures in the kingdom of God. Jesus didn't come with the message that if we followed him we would have an easy life quite the opposite. To save your life you had to lose it. Jesus' swift movement asking who they think he is to summoning them to follow him to the death, shows we cannot separate thinking from action in the Christian faith. As we contemplate this challenge it is good to remember, there are no half measures.

We often find it completely bewildering to know how to understand all that God is doing and saying, both in our times of great joy and our times of great sadness. The word that comes to us, leading us on to follow Jesus even when we haven't a clue what's going on is the word that came from the cloud on that strange day in Galilee:

“This is my son, whom I have chosen, Listen to him”.

Q. Do you give time to listen to God?

Q. Where and in what way have you heard Him in the past week or so?