

St Marc, Grenoble
Sunday 15th May 2022 (Easter 5)
Acts 11: 1 - 18
John 13: 30 - 35
'Glorified'

Good Morning - welcome to you all, both here and at home.

Let's Pray:

This morning's sermon is going to focus on the Gospel reading - which is quite short, but stuffed full of things we need to think about ...

But, as usual, first I'd like to hear what you noticed, or heard - what hit you in our Bible readings this morning??

So let's move on with our Gospel reading: starting with v. 1 - which I added into the reading to give us a picture of what was happening -

This reading from John's Gospel is at the beginning of what some scholars refer to as 'The Farewell Discourses' - Jesus' retirement speech if you like.

Over the next few chapters, we read about Jesus preparing His disciples for His dramatic departure and preparing them for life without Him beside them. It has to be said that, despite this preparation, it seems His disciples were totally unprepared for what was going to happen over the next few days.

It's fair to say that it was only some time after the crucifixion, and Jesus' resurrection, when the disciples met Him again, that the 'penny eventually began to drop' and they started to understand – with help from the risen Lord – what it was that Jesus had been trying to prepare them for.

With the benefit of more than 2,000 years of hindsight, we can – with great difficulty – get the gist of what Jesus was trying to tell them and prepare them for; but, at the time, it was totally uncharted territory, completely outside the bounds of human experience, so it's not surprising that they just didn't 'get it'!

John tells us that 'Jesus knew that the time had come to leave this world, to go to the Father.' It was time for Jesus to leave the world in a startling and totally unexpected climax to His earthly ministry; a clear reminder for us that the events of what we call 'Holy Week' were no tragic accident of history;

Jesus wasn't simply in the wrong place at the wrong time; no, this was all part of God's deeply loving plan to redeem His people.

To add more depth to the picture John also explains 'It was before the Passover'. When John mentions a Jewish Festival, he's showing us how Jesus applies its meaning to himself; Jesus is, simply, the real 'Passover Lamb' whose sacrifice is sufficient to redeem his people.

John continues, telling us 'it was supper time' ... Interesting isn't it? The story of the most life changing event in history is preceded by a vivid story of intimate family fellowship meal and love. John has already reminded us: Jesus had always loved his own people in the world; and now he loved them right through to the end.

During our twenty years or so of ministry, Julia and I have moved around a lot - (and this job is no exception) - it's always hard saying goodbye to friends we've come to know over recent years. But, this is the 21C, we can keep in contact easily; travel is relatively easy too by - trains and boats and planes.

But, spare a thought for Jesus' disciples, called from their homes, their occupations and their normal lives by Jesus, and taking a massive 'leap of faith' to follow Him and become 'fishers of men'.

These were ordinary working folk – yet Jesus taught them practical theology and dynamic evangelism - which was totally unconventional - for the time.

These disparate working men followed Jesus, as their Rabbi, through thick and thin, day and night for about three years. As well as being followers, they became His close friends – closer than family. In reality, they devoted their entire lives to following and working with Him.

Now, He was telling them that he was going to leave them; that was hard for them to understand. Even harder was what he was trying to tell them about how and why He was leaving.

He also told them: 'I am only with you for a little while longer. You'll look for me; but, where I am going you cannot come – at least not for the time being.' Was he about to desert them?? He seemed to be speaking in riddles. What were they to make of all this peculiar talk, behind closed doors??

When Judas sidled out of the door, still with his piece of bread in his hand, Jesus made a comment about the Son of Man being glorified; and God being Glorified in Him ... what was that all about??

Of course, they hadn't yet experienced the horror of the crucifixion; or the outstanding glory of the resurrection.

We have the benefit of hindsight. We know what followed.

The 'disaster' of His betrayal and crucifixion; we now realise was all part of God's amazing plan for the once for all redemption of His people; and the unequalled triumph and glory of the resurrection.

Despite all that, Jesus eventually left the disciples to carry on, But He also provided them, very soon afterwards, with the amazing support and guidance of the Holy Spirit, who enabled them to continue doing many of the things they had seen Jesus do.

Jesus also gave them (and through them, us too) what he called a 'New Commandment': 'Love one another!' But, even more than that: 'Love one another, just as I have loved you!'

That was and continues to be a really 'tall order'. The disciples were just like family; and, just like brothers, they fell out with each other quite frequently! But, Jesus commands them – and us – to love each other with the depths of patience, tenacity and forgiveness that He consistently showed them.

And as part of the continuing family of Christians – disciples of Jesus – that is exactly what he calls us to do – even now. Jesus tells us that this is exactly how people will recognise us as Christians, by the way we share Jesus' love with each other!! Well, I'm not sure about you, but I find that remarkably challenging; even quite scary ...

For a start, I'm afraid I don't even like all the Christians I know – so it is incredibly hard to love them with the depth of love (including care and forgiveness), which Jesus **commands** us to share with each other.

I often ask myself whether people can possibly tell that I am a Christian, by the depth of love I show to other Christians. And, I'm afraid that sometimes the conclusions I come up with make me squirm with shame.

But we know for sure that Jesus has been, and is, **glorified** for eternity by His death and resurrection; and despite all our sins and failures it seems Jesus is still calling us; and depending on us - with the power and help of the Holy Spirit - to 'grow the fellowship of His Church'.

As we stumble through the end of Eastertide, towards the wonder of Ascensiontide and the power of Pentecost, let's take up the challenge Jesus gives us and pray that the Holy Spirit will delight, equip, inspire and empower us to share Jesus' remarkable love with the rather mixed bunch around us. So that everybody – especially in the wider community – will know, without doubt, that WE **are** His disciples – the followers of Jesus in this place.

Let's PRAY