

Wrington and Lynch Chapels

Minister's Website Article for February 2022

If you are reading this wondering whether you should follow Jesus, and how great it might be, this will shock you. Yes, Jesus says, 'Follow me'. Yet he leads into difficult places, lives in a challenging way, and invites us to follow. He never sugar-coats the difficulty, and discourages those who think it's easy. Salvation is a gift of grace, but costs our lives. I guess that's why 'Pick up your cross, die to yourself, follow me,' isn't often preached. Then, we still filter out what we don't like. Even in the first century, when this message was so new, people picked those aspects they were excited about, and dropped the rest. In a world where you had to appease the gods, this amazing message of grace hit home: that God became one of us, to show his love, save us from sin, set up his kingdom, shut down religion.

This became very popular. But people often only wanted part of it. The problem, or joy, is that God never insists - he invites. God doesn't want robots, he wants friends, who want to be with him and do what they can to follow. That can't be forced. Christians are people who have been born afresh, by the action of the Holy Spirit, because they gave up trying to do this themselves and trusted God, through Jesus. That's why I don't believe churches can legislate. We invite people to know more of this wonderful gospel of God's love, shown to us in Jesus. We encourage, guide, point to Jesus; but after that, it's up to you and how much you want to explore this wonderful relationship with God. Jesus got rid of the barriers, but doesn't force people forward. That's also why the bible says that when we live according to our flesh, we're not living according to who we truly are. The Apostle Paul, brings that up again and again. Where did he get this? From Jesus. Jesus always taught that the centre of the person is who they really are. It's that real person whom God calls to himself and changes.

Jesus said:

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognised by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn-bushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Does that sound difficult? The good news is that God, in Jesus cleanses our hearts. We are clean, ready to make choices that keep us walking with God. When God asks us to do something, he works inside to make that happen. We are simply to let what he does inside work its way out. Isn't that good? That's how you follow Jesus - listen to God and let him work in you. Yes, you'll make mistakes; but God doesn't condemn his children. Let him work.

Every blessing

Duncan