

Home Group sermon notes 2nd September 2018 Luke 24

It's early Sept - start of new academic year - and we normally set aside a few weeks at this time of year to refresh our vision together as a church. What are we here for, who are we aiming to be, where do we want to go as a church and how are we going to get there?

Our vision is to be .- a growing community of grace, that's our long-term-vision. And within that we have an aim for everyone here at St Pauls seeking to be increasingly courageous for Christ.

- **growing** - growing deeper in faith and growing numerically;
- **community** - not a religious social club but a real community where we love each other sacrificially and do life together, being vulnerable as we are known for who we really are
- **of grace**. Grace is undeserved favour of God given in and through Christ. Grace is what Jesus died to bring us, Grace is unique to Christianity.

1: looking BACK with thanks. (a vital spiritual discipline)

Mission Action Plan: from prayer to reality: a new monthly Cafe Church with St Martin's, Christian mindfulness courses, new Parenting Teenagers group, gained our first Eco Church award, started a new wednesday night youth group, new home groups, World church- 5 overseas mission trips, we piloted a new style of 9am service, the men's ministry momentum, and new leaders and new vocations .

As well as all the new , the ministries through the week are amazing - early bird cafe, nursery, our array of children and youth ministries- onsite here and in 5 Dorking schools,, midweek congregations, social justice ministries, pastoral care, hospitality, worship, discipleship, alpha --- **we are so blessed.**

Life at St Pauls hasn't been perfect - it has been a season of grief and mourning as well as joy. We have suffered the death of several dearly loved members of the church and we miss them keenly. We employed a new youth pastor but her appointment lasted only a very short time. There have been struggles in life, in health, in faith, and there have been losses. We have not done all that we hoped and prayed we would do. BUT - by God's grace we have seen people come to faith, we have seen people grow in faith and persevere in faith - and together with other Dorking churches we have been part of seeing the Kingdom of God grow in our town.

Questions

- How familiar are we individually with the vision of the church - does it excite us?
- What do we want to look back on with thanksgiving for our progress as disciples over the last 6 months or so? How has God been at work in us? Can we give examples of doing something that for us has felt courageous for Christ?

2: looking forward with faith- What does God have in store for us? What does God want to see happen here?

God wants more people to know him. The Gospel is good news for every single person in Dorking, and at the moment there's about 20,000 people in our town who are living without the grace and mercy and truth of Jesus directing their lives. That must grieve us, that must be our primary concern.

Archbishop William Temple said - The Church is the only society on earth that exists for the benefit of its non members.

At St Paul's we see people of all ages come to faith every year - but the truth is that we don't see very many people come to faith every year. I believe God is calling us to a new season of mission and evangelism and God is asking us to be courageously dependent on him to use us to bring many people to faith.

QUESTIONS:

1. At the moment we baptise about 10 babies a year, and about 10 youth and adults. What would it take for us to see those numbers triple?
2. Each year we run 3 alpha courses with about 30 non Christians exploring faith. What would it take to see 100 people on alpha?
3. God wants to be transforming the present life and the eternal future of every single person in our town. So how can we be more in line with his heart and his purpose?

3. What we can learn from Luke 24?

-the end of Luke's gospel, the risen Jesus is with the disciples and the truth is dawning on them as he opens up their minds v 45 - he says that everything that has happened was promised in Scripture - the Messiah will suffer, die, and rise again and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed to the whole world. Then v48 - a tiny but critical verse - You are witnesses of all this.

3a) **you are witnesses.** The risen Jesus gives each one of his followers that identity. It is an identity that is full of purpose. The image is like in a court room where the facts, the events of history - the nature of God and the purpose of human life -this is all up for debate „ And the followers of Jesus have the job of standing up in the room and testifying - we are witnesses - we can testify to the truth that Jesus is alive and grace and truth are to be found in him. It is not an easy job. it will be costly, it will be hard. The word Jesus uses to tell his disciples to be witnesses - the word is martyr.

QUESTION: In what ways will being witnesses be costly (for the first disciples and for us today)?

3b) **you are to wait.** v49 - I am going to send you what my Father has promised. You cannot be a fruitful witness for Jesus in your own strength. You are going to need divine empowerment. The Holy Spirit is going to come, So - stay in the city and WAIT. Dont make a move until the Spirit moves you. Dont spring into action until the Spirit acts. Dont be leaders in mission, wait to be led .

v 53 they go to the temple and stay there continually, praying and thanking God, and waiting for the empowerment of the Spirit.

ACTIVITY: Come as a Home Group or individually to the prayer space this week and be part of the programme of continual prayer at St Pauls - waiting on the Lord, praising him, and praying for ourselves and our town.

Question: What's our experience of 'waiting on the Lord' in prayer? How does God want to deepen our love for him through our prayer life?