

Small Groups @ TBC - Sermon Discussion Notes

Date of Sermon: 2 September 2018
Speaker: Mike Levy
Title: Meet Jesus - Jesus and the centurion and the stranger
Read: Mark 15 verses 21 to 39

Introduction:

Last the series on Meet Jesus

Jesus

When we read of the life of Jesus we read of his miracles, see his power at work as he heals, turns water into wine, makes a banquet out of a few loaves and fishes and even raises the dead to life Who wouldn't want to follow a powerful Jesus?

We read of the things he said, how he challenged authority, made the comfortable feel uncomfortable turned the thinking of the world in its head. Who wouldn't want to follow a rebel Jesus?

But this Jesus? The Jesus in Mark 15 is vulnerable. Tried twice, falsely accused, beaten, bound, spat on and humiliated. Too weak to carry his own cross. At this point it seems as if the all-powerful has become power-less. It is at this point that he meets a centurion and a stranger.

Centurion

The centurion was a military man in charge of 100 men. Part of a well drilled, well-disciplined and organized army that had conquered most of Europe through order, strength, power and might. Someone who would honour and opponent who put up a brave fight, someone who had probably seen countless crucifixions and not given them a second thought. But this time it was different.

There was something in the way that Jesus died that drew the centurion to him, and it seems to have been the fact that a powerful God limited his power, he showed his love by showing his weakness and kindness, and this drew the declaration "this is truly the Son of God". The identity of Jesus is inseparably linked to his death.

It seems like a paradox that at the very heart of Christian faith is Jesus the Son of God who showed true strength and power by becoming vulnerable and weak of the day of his crucifixion.

Simon

A few hours earlier a weak Jesus had struggled to carry his cross through the streets of Jerusalem and a stranger, Simon of Cyrene was made to do it for him. It is hard to read this and not think of the words of Jesus in Mark 8 verses 34&35 [**Read the now**].

It is not easy to follow Jesus, we can fall into the trap of thinking that the whole point of following Jesus is to make our life easier, but in fact it can be the opposite as we try to live the Jesus life. To put him first. Are we prepared to do the hard stuff and walk alongside Jesus and carry the cross?

Thornbury Baptist: Loving God - Loving One Another - Loving Neighbour & World

How did Simon feel? He had not been through all Jesus had been through but how many steps did he take before he started to stumble?

Maybe we first encountered God, and continue to do so, in our weakness, when we are down, when we recognize our need of him. God does not sit above us waiting for us to get strong enough to pull ourselves up, he becomes weak like ourselves, so he can lift us up.

On the day that Jesus met Simon and the Centurion he became weak so that we would become strong in him.

Reflection

1. What is it about Jesus that attracts you to him?
2. What do you think of the idea that Jesus showed true strength and power by becoming weak and vulnerable?
3. Sometimes some people say that Christianity is for the "soft" and "emotional" how does the Centurion challenge this thinking?
4. Does the way we present the Christian faith make it difficult to reach some people? If not, then move on but if so then what should we do about that?
5. What has it meant for you to carry the cross?
6. How have you met Jesus in your weakness? With what results?
7. "God becomes weak like us so that he can lift us up" - Discuss!

Pray

Pray for one another:

- (a) So that we each have the words to say and the things to do that will make others say "truly Jesus is the Son of God"
- (b) For the "cross" we are carrying - any issues currently.
- (c) In our weakness

Follow up

Remember to share with each other again in the weeks to come and follow up on the prayers you have prayed.