

Sunday Next before Lent A 26th February 2017 ¹

Place: St Mary's

Theme: Being Disciples Matt17.1-9

- ◆ For our Lent lectures this year we are going to be using Rowan Williams book 'Being Disciples' and we are going to be going on a pilgrimage around and with the team on Tuesday nights finishing back in our individual parishes for the final session.
- ◆ I have chosen this book because I have been thinking about the team and wondering whether the vision for the team should be 'Making Disciples in Wimbledon'. This is something that we will need to decide together with the other churches in the parish. To do this we are going to have a parish away day at the Kairos Centre on the 25th November. There will be more details about this later. For now though it seems good to start by thinking together about what it means to be a disciples and Rowan Williams' book is a helpful way to do that.
- ◆ Rowan introduces the book saying that discipleship means both how each of us individually lives our lives and as the Church. Individually Christian Disciples are called to live every aspect of their lives open to Christ and His Spirit. As the Church, we are called to be a learning community, where we learn together from Christ and one another how to grow in love for one another and God. We are called together

to deepen our relationships with one another and with God.

- ◆ Discipleship is not an activity that we participate in from time to time, but a state of being. It is to do with staying or abiding. Our relationships with God and one another in Christ need to be committed and ongoing.
- ◆ We learn by watching, attending and spending time with Christ, aware of his presence with us not just on Sundays but all the time and everywhere. Discipleship is a state of awareness and readiness to be changed. The transformation is not just of our behaviour but of the way we see and experience the whole world. Discipleship is about a revolution in our dreams and desires. We catch a glimpse of this in our Gospel this morning. The disciples are willing to follow Jesus up the mountain – those of you who have been to the Holy Land will know that it is a big one. When they reach the top the disciples catch a glimpse of Christ's glory and hear God speak to them. Their understanding of Jesus is transformed by what they see.
- ◆ At the heart of discipleship is expectancy that God may at any moment break through the ordinary and transform it. Rowan Williams says that this makes prayer a bit like bird watching. Of course a bird watcher will tell you that you don't always see the bird you hope to when you go out, but as you keep at it, as you learn to look

and listen, as you learn to be still and wait you start to see more and more. You learn where you are most likely to see things and what to look for and when. Prayer and discipleship like so many of the most rewarding things in life need practice and persistence. We need to keep at it.

- ◆ This expectancy is also at the heart of what it is to be the church. When we meet together we expect to meet with Christ in one another. We need to ask ourselves how is Christ present in this person or event.
- ◆ Being a disciple also means following. We go where Christ leads us, not necessarily where we would want or seek to go. Discipleship always takes us where we do not want to go at some point, because discipleship always takes us to the Cross. That is where Peter, James and John will go with Jesus when they come down the mountain.. They will follow Him as he sets out for Jerusalem. Part of following him to the cross is the recognition that we have to put following him above everything else, even our own lives.
- ◆ The Cross is not the end of the journey, but it is an unavoidable part of it. It seems likely to me that Jesus took the disciples up the mount of transfiguration because he and they needed to be reminded of the Glory and the intimacy of with the Father that was the ultimate goal of their journey. They needed it to have the courage to go to Jerusalem.

- ◆ Following Jesus takes us ultimately to the heart of the Father. Christ give us the spirit and leads us to the Father, so that we can take our place in the eternal joy of the love of the Trinity.
- ◆ The journey of discipleship is not just about finding God ourselves, but also about transforming the world. As we develop habits of attentiveness and expectancy that free us from ego and anxiety we will discover God shaped changes happening around us. Ultimately discipleship is simply learning how to be a place in the world where the act of God can come alive.
- ◆ I hope that as an outward sign of your willingness to undertake this journey you will be able to join in a pilgrimage around the churches of the team for our lent lectures and explore further what it means to be a disciple of Christ.