

Seeing Christ – John 14:17-24

The Bible is both a book of magnificent revelation and profound mystery. In it we have all we need to know God, to understand our purpose as men and women on this earth – to discover how we can live full and abundant lives. These things have been fully revealed! We have many verses that tell us who God is: He is love, He is Holy, He is Just, He is True – He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit – He Saviour, He is Judge, He is merciful! And yet there is a sense in which we can never fully 'know God'. In every page of Scripture there is revelation & mystery – isn't this true also from our experience?

A Great Mystery

Why would God create a world that would reject Him? Why would God create men and women who would hate him, run from him, deny His existence? Why would an immaterial Spirit create a material world, and clothe himself with the very matter He created, to suffer more than any other? From all eternity past He existed in perfect happiness – and He designed and created this world, that would turn its back on Him. Not only did God agree to a plan that would lead to Golgotha – to the crucifixion on Christ. God designed this plan. Surely He would only write the cross into the story of Creation if there was something unimaginably, incomprehensibly wonderful achieved through it. In these verses, we catch a glimpse of the glory Christ has for us.

Q. He chose us in him before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4) – How does this challenge the view of the Cross as a 'back-up plan'?

To See God (verses 17-19)

Read John 14:17-19

Jesus speaks in parallel in these verses. Firstly of the Helper- the Holy Spirit. Then He speaks of Himself. The same thing applies to both the Holy Spirit and Himself: there are those who see, and those who don't – those who know and those who don't. There are many great gifts that come to us through the gospel – and this one comes repeatedly: "to see God".

"Blessed [happy] are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (**Matthew 5:8**). This is not an instruction for perfection. Pure in heart are not those who have no faults, but the Old Testament uses this description for those who are free from idols, devoted to God. We can invert this verse to bring more understanding: "unhappy are the impure of heart for they cannot see God". A heart compromised by idols, by the worship of anything other than God cannot see God. The purer the heart - the freer your affections are from the pollution of sin - the more enabled you are to see the beauty of God. We need to make room for something much bigger. Our hearts need to be dredged! The Holy Spirit will highlight these things in our hearts, convicting us of sin, idols, unforgiveness, for us to deal with. By confessing sin, removing idols and remembering the work of Christ, we can see God better.

Q. How can we be tempted to find happiness apart from God? How do these 'idols' try to replace Him?

Q. How can you realise the prompting of the Holy Spirit in revealing these 'idols' in our hearts?

Q. What can we do to respond to this conviction by the Holy Spirit, when our hearts need dredging?

Read Revelation 22:4, 1st John 3:2 and Psalm 27:4

There is a spiritual reality to seeing Christ, and a future physical reality to seeing Christ. Nothing can compare to the glory we can see in Christ. Seeing Him is so powerful that all who see Him become like Him in an instant. David's one wish was to see the beauty of God – the more you have seen of God, the more you want of God. The world cannot see, and considers this folly. What we know as lavish worship, for the One who deserves so much more, the world considers senseless and foolish.

Q. How do your friends/family/colleagues react to your acts worship and devotion?

Jesus has given us opportunity to 'see Him'. But there is a great cost. Upon the cross, Jesus who had always known the presence of God, cried out *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*. Jesus promised not to leave us as orphans, but on the Cross He was orphaned – in order that we might become sons.

Q. How can we honour the sacrifice paid by Jesus - that we can become sons and know God?

To Know the Love of the Triune God (verses 20, 21 & 23)

Read John 14:20-24

Here again comes a great revelation and mystery – God went through with the plan, in order that we might know His love! For this is the true eternal reality – the love of God – the most 'real' thing there is. What was God 'doing' before He created - He was loving Father, Son and Spirit. The overflow of this love resulted in the creation – a creation that included the cross and resurrection - that the Church might enter into an everlasting embrace with God! The Spirit poured out into our hearts.

We have been welcomed in to the 'Eternal Dance of Love', incorporated into the beautiful movement between the Father, Son and Spirit. We catch a glimpse of it now, and will know it fully in glory.

Q. How does a church, knowing the eternal love displayed by God, affect the community it is in?