

Home Group notes for the week following 29th October 2017

DISCIPLESHIP: Faithful Love

AS WE GATHER

The Jewish religious leaders were angry and unsettled, and questioned Jesus about fundamental relationships, hoping that His answers would discredit Him in the eyes of the people, and give them ammunition to have Him arrested.

READING SCRIPTURE Deuteronomy 34:1-12 Psalm 90:1-6 + 13-17 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8
Matthew 22:34-46

THINKING TOGETHER

Matthew records that the Jewish leaders' final question to Jesus was an ethical one about the Law (Chapter 22:43-40). After responding to their question, and knowing they did not want to hear the truth, Jesus asked them a personal question which was even more fundamental (Chapter 22:41-46).

Have you ever been in a situation in which, knowing you were on shaky ground, you did not want to hear the truth from someone else? Discuss

Those who witness to / proclaim God's truth have a special responsibility to be honest and straightforward in words and in actions (1Thessalonians 2:3-8). Their focus should be on Jesus Christ and their witness should point to Him.

Why is this so important in Christian ministry? Discuss

Do some preachers / teachers tell people what they want to hear? Why do they do this? Discuss

The teachers of the law had over the years documented 613 commandments in the Law – 248 being positive, and 365 negative. No one could ever hope to know and obey all these so they were divided into important laws or less important / trivial laws. There was great debate among the religious leaders about which was / were the most important. What they had lost sight of was that to break only one law is to be guilty in the eyes of God (Deuteronomy 34:1-12 and James 2:10).

Jesus responded to the Pharisees' question (Matthew 22:36) by quoting the confession of faith that was recited daily by every orthodox Jew (Matthew 22:37-38 and Deuteronomy 6:4-5). He then added a second commandment (Matthew 22:39-40 and Leviticus 19:18); putting it on the same level as the first (1 John 4:7-21).

How do these two commandments make it possible for us to show our love for God? Discuss

To love God involves the will as well as the heart, and gentleness is love in action

What does this statement mean? Discuss (1 Thessalonians 2:1-8 and Romans 13:8-10)

Barclay states that it is only when we love God that people become lovable

What does he mean by this? Discuss (Genesis 1:26-27)

What does gentleness in relationships with others entail? Discuss (1 Thessalonians 2:7)

What happens in relationships when there is no love of God present? Discuss

Jesus knew there were national misconceptions about the Messiah, and knew the religious leaders opposed Him because when He received worship / acclamation as 'Son of David' they could not believe it was right to worship a creature. They saw it as possible idolatry.

Now Jesus had confused them, because if the Law commands that we love God and our neighbour, then how could it be wrong for the Jews to love Jesus? (John 8:42). If we have a right relationship with God, we will have no problem with His commands.

Is this always true? Discuss

Jesus made His question to the Jewish leaders sound like a theological one which they could answer immediately (Matthew 22:42) but without personal spiritual insight. Quoting from Psalm 110:1 Jesus asked how David – speaking in the Spirit (Matthew 22:43) – could call the Messiah Lord, if He was also his (David's) Son ? (Matthew 22:45).

What is the only possible answer to Jesus' question? Discuss (Psalm 110 Isaiah 11:19 Revelation 22:16. See also Matthew 12:22-23 + 20:29-32 and Hebrews 1:1-13)

IN CLOSING

Making a decision about God / Christ is a matter of life or death. Such a decision – like love – involves and is an act of both the will and of the heart. Where there is love there will be service and obedience.

Both the Old and the New Testaments proclaim the deity of 'the One who came to save and to reign' – Jesus Christ; who although a descendent of David is greater than he.

How do Christ and love fit into your life?

PRAYER

Almighty God,
your Son has shown us how to love one another;
let our love for you overflow into joyful service and
be a healing witness to our neighbours. Amen