**St Martins C3 – February 11, 2024**

**Discipleship Explored – Relating to God**

**Sermon Summary:**

Our primary relationship in life is our relationship with God. Developing a healthy relationship with God is foundational to our discipleship journey. So, what does a healthy relationship with God look like? What ought I expect to experience when I connect with God? These are good questions and ones that Jesus seeks to answer in a discussion that He has with His disciples, just before His crucifixion found in John 14-17.

**Reading: John 14:16-20 (NIV)**

**The first thing that Jesus explains is the reality that He is going to leave, but their relationship with God will continue through the presence of God’s Spirit in their lives.** Every aspect of theirs, (and our), relationship with God will now be facilitated by the Holy Spirit.Therefore, the more we allow the Holy Spirit into our lives, the more of God we will experience. This didn’t make much sense to the disciples at the time, but after Pentecost it all made sense.

**Reading: John 15:4-8 (NKJV)**

The Holy Spirit will facilitate a personal connection with God, as you choose to ABIDE or REMAIN with Him. As we commit our lives to God, as we obey Him, as we give Him our time an attention, the Holy Spirit will deepen our experience and in turn our relationship with God. So, what should we expect to experience in our lives as the Holy Spirit draws us into a deeper relationship with God?

1. **The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.**

The Holy Spirit will reveal what we need to know about God and His ways. He will clearly reveal deep and powerful truths that will change our lives. Truth that is more powerful than any other information we will come across. Truth that will shape a life-changing perspective in our lives. The truth about God, ourselves, how we are to relate to others and how we will partner with God in extending His Kingdom.

1. **The Holy Spirit will bring God’s presence to us.**

Some of the ways Christians experience God’s presence is a feeling of conviction, or peace, or love, or comfort. What is experienced is somewhat dependent on the needs God is responding to in us. Often as we focus our attention on God in worship we experience a sense of wonder or closeness with God. This is another example of the Holy Spirit bringing an awareness of God’s presence to us.

1. **The Holy Spirit will empower us to do God’s kingdom work.**

God’s power accompanies God’s presence. In the context of a close relationship with God, we can expect to see God do powerful things around our lives. As we seek to bring God’s life to others and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit, God will do a work in them, but we will also experience a deeper relationship with God as we partner with Him in His work.

**Because our relationship and experience of God is facilitated by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we ought to continually seek to be filled with the Spirit in order to go deeper in our relationship with God this year.**

**Suggested questions for Connect Group discussion:**

*What are some things that we can expect to experience in our relationship with God, because the Holy Spirit is present in our lives?*

*How do those things deepen our relationship with God?*

*What might be a specific area in our relationship with God that we could grow in this year? (Examples: Sensing God’s presence more, hearing God more clearly, allowing God to use us in more powerful ways, etc)*

*What might seeking to be continually filled with God’s Holy Spirit look like for you?*

Songs we sung on Sunday:

* King of glory
* Story to tell
* Praises – Be lifted up
* Jesus you alone
* King of Kings

**Monday’s Devotion – This is God at work**

**Reading: Acts 2:1-21**

The day that God poured out His Spirit on Christ’s first followers in Jerusalem, was a powerful day. It was the beginning of the Spirit’s work in the church, which is continuing to this day.

For me, what stands out in these opening verses is how Luke highlights the fact that what is happening here is a work of God. Those in the street were trying to find an explanation for what was happening. However, Peter clarifies that this is God at work. The presence of the Holy Spirit is how God is now working among His people and in the world as a whole.

Everything that was happening was coming from God’s empowering presence. The wind, the tongues of fire, the passionate praising of God, the speaking in tongues and even Peter’s boldness to talk to the crowd was evidence that the Holy Spirit was moving.

What will God do in us and among us as He pours out His Spirit in our lives? – I am not sure of the details, because that is His call, not mine, but if it is a work of the Spirit, it will be obvious that God’s hand is on it. Things will happen that we can’t make happen ourselves. It will be Spirit work that brings God’s life.

When God pours out His Spirit in our lives, it will be obvious that what is happening is from Him. Our response ought to be trust in what He is doing, not trying to explain it by other means.

**Tuesday’s Devotion – All about Jesus**

**Reading: Acts 2:22-40**

When people do recognise that God is at work, there is an immediate danger of our focus being on the wrong thing. We might be captivated by the miracles or the person doing them. Knowing this Peter quickly draws their attention to the person all this work of the Spirit points to. The person of Jesus.

I don’t know why the Holy Spirit consistently deflects attention away from Himself and points us to Christ. There is an aspect of mystery to this that is privy information to God, not to us. What is revealed by Christ, is that the work of the Holy Spirit and how God has worked in the Church is the way God has ordered things, and He expects us to highlight this elevation of Christ to others.

Peter does exactly this. He focuses the crowds attention on Jesus and who Jesus is. Notice then what happens next. The Holy Spirit starts working on the hearts of those in the crowd and prepares them to receive the gospel. Peter preaches the gospel and many people respond. Again, not a work of Peter, but a work of the Spirit.

We need to keep in mind that there is a purpose to the Spirit’s work. It is not to bring glory to us, or to His work, it is always to magnify Christ and Christ’s work.

How is God’s Spirit using you to reveal the person and work of Jesus to others?

**Wednesday’s Devotion – Life-changing**

**Acts 2:42-45**

*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.*

The presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these first Christians, completely changed how they lived their lives.

What they did with their day, how they spent their money, their values and priorities all changed.

The Holy Spirit was revealing to them who God was and what His Kingdom priorities were. This truth was powerful and life-changing. It led them to live a completely different life. A life which God blessed with the Kingdom fruit of unity, miracles, fellowship and salvations.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, will bring about a life-changing perspective that ought to change our values and priorities. As the Holy Spirit leads us on this life-changing journey, what He is looking for from us is a listening ear and a willingness to obey His leadings.

Are we listening and obeying God’s promptings?

**Thursday’s Devotion – Miraculous.**

**Acts 2:43**

*Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.*

Miracles were a regular feature of Jesus’ ministry and the ministry of the Church. Throughout history many people have tried to explain why we don’t see more miracles in the church today. Some have concluded that miracles were for the early church, but not for the church now. However, this is a very weak argument. If the Spirit is present now, as He was in the early church, then the works of the Spirit ought to also be present.

The miracles in the early church led people to be in awe of Christ and seek to follow Him and miracles now ought to perform the same function.

We ought to be feel continually challenged to seek more of God’s presence in and around our lives, so that we see people turn to Christ. How and when God does miracles is not up to us, so we don’t seek to do miracles in and of themselves; however, we ought to be praying for God to bring more of His Spirit work among us. As we do that, we will see the miraculous, which ought to inspire us to deeper faith.

The impact of the miraculous work of the Spirit in the early church was a sense of awe and worship of God. As we seek more of the Spirit’s fullness in our lives and partner with Him in His Kingdom work, may we and others also be filled with Godly awe.

**Friday’s Devotion – Kingdom growth**

**Reading: Acts 3:1-10**

Peter and John would have walked past this lame man many times before. What was different about this particular day? One of the things that was different is that they were now a lot more aware of God’s presence and power in their lives, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It also seems from the context that the Spirit especially prompted them this day to stop and pay attention to this man’s plight.

God was also setting this all up for people all over the city, including the religious leaders, to hear about how He was now extending His Kingdom through His Spirit and His Church.

As we look at these events and seek out an application for us, we can see how important it is for us to filled with God’s Spirit, so that God can use us to extend His Kingdom.

1. Just as Peter and John were empowered by the Holy Spirit to do what they did, we also need to be aware of the presence and power that we carry with us every day.
2. We like Peter and John, need to be attentive to the Holy Spirit prompting us to pay attention to someone in need. Specifically how God wants to use us to meet that need and bring something of God’s Kingdom life to them.
3. Our attentiveness and obedience is important as we won’t initially see the full Kingdom impact in the moment.

So, are we being attentive and obedient to the Spirit’s leadings?