**Holy habits – Worship: Week 2**

Last week we looked at how we worship in response to God’s astounding love and amazing grace in dying on the Cross for you and me. It was a harrowing, cruel death, preceded by a fake trial, torture, humiliation and the desertion of his friends and followers. Worse still, Jesus felt what it was like to be separated from His Father by sin, not His sin but ours.

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ, my God; all the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood. See, from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down; did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown? Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. Isaac Watts perfectly describes exactly why we worship God.

God’s astounding love and amazing grace in dying on the Cross for you and me is more than enough reason for us to worship God, but there is more. Far, far more. The power of death was destroyed by the love of Christ, and Jesus returned to life on that first Easter Sunday nearly 2000 years ago. No-one expected that. The religious leaders and the Romans thought their problems had been solved when they watched Jesus die. The disciples were in hiding in terror, and had no understanding of the prophecies that spoke about rising from death (John chapter 20 verse 9). The women who followed Jesus had gone to the tomb to anoint his body properly as everything had been so hasty on the Friday when the Sabbath was starting. Neither they nor anyone else expected the Resurrection.

Our problem is that we already know the ending. There is no surprise for us. It is impossible for us to experience the kaleidoscope of emotions that went through everyone’s minds on that first Easter Sunday and in the days and weeks that followed. Fear, disbelief, denial – many never got past this first stage in Jerusalem, and many still cannot pass this stage. Doubt mixed with hope, maybe – maybe not, will I be let down and disappointed again, it can’t be true but what if it is? Most of the disciples went through this stage, and many people are still in this stage. But for some there was the dawning realisation that it was indeed true, and their joy and wonder and amazement surpassed anything they had ever known. Who is this man? asked the disciples in the boat on Galilee (Luke 8 verse 25). Now they knew for certain that Jesus was the Son of God, God in human form, and their worship showed their joy and wonder and amazement.

Our worship is thoughtful and solemn when we think of the suffering and the sacrifice of Christ. It is full of joy and wonder and amazement when we praise Christ for His triumph over sin and over death. We descend into grief but never despair when we worship the crucified Christ, and we praise with elation and jubilation, awe and delight when we worship the risen Christ.

Worship is the culmination of our whole experience of God’s astounding love and amazing grace in dying on the Cross and rising again in total victory over sin and over death. We respond to this experience by offering ourselves completely to God in our worship and in our lives. Worship is not something that we do in a particular time and place. It is our total response to God’s astounding love and amazing grace and Christ’s total victory. Love so amazing, so divine, demands our soul, our life, our all.

*Produced by Glenn Evans on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*