Jesus is Lord!

St Francis

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2 Cor 4:1-6

Many years ago me and my friend took a bunch of youth club kids to a theme park. We went into the dome cinema, which a strange acoustic . Everyone was standing around waiting for the film to start. One of the kids cupped his hands as a joke and said “will everyone please sit down” – and they did! What authority! It wouldn’t happen now!

We heard in our reading, Paul say to the Corinthians…

**5**For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.

Jesus Christ as Lord. Lord means master, authority figure, he who must be obeyed. Does it smack of a bygone – age? We are a little sceptical of Lords and Masters these days. The assumption is that they are in it for themselves rightly or wrongly; that they deceive us with trickery and distortion.

In this age of suspicion of any authority, we tend to fall back on ourselves instead. The other day I was talking to a man I know well. He told me, “I’m not religious”, I said, “in practice or in belief”, he said, “I believe in something and that’s me. I make my own luck”.

In this day and age we all want to be our own kings or queens. Near Oasis Academy there is a hairdresser called “leaders” – the implication is that if you come here we’ll make a champion, and that is you.

Paul’s statement seems to suggest that there is another way at the heart of the gospel.

In the Christian life there are no leaders, winners or champions. There are only second-in-command people. Why - because Jesus Christ is our leader, our champion and our winner.

Heb 12:2 … Jesus, the **champion** who initiates and perfects our faith.

Jesus is no worldly leader, self-serving, manipulative, clinging to power and prestige. No. He is the one totally dedicated to the common good of his people – vigorous, courageous, self-sacrificing and kind. He is our saviour, our rescuer, our hero who paid the awful price for our sins on the cross. He is the defeater of evil, the remover of guilt, the voice of the desperate and the destitute.

He is the exact likeness of God as it says in verse 4.

Remember in Genesis in the beginning? The opening words of the drama of creation: GOD said “let there be light” and there was light.

In verse 6 Paul is talking about a second act of creation – an illumination in our hearts themselves enabling each and every one of us see the glory of God through the face of Jesus.

This is our Lord and our God.

Deep down all of us are looking to follow something or someone, whether it’s a football team, a band, a favourite technology, blogger or whatever.

When Steve and I were on a bike ride once, I was following Steve, and another cyclist whizzed past and the next thing I know Steve trying to catch him up, and we’re doing 16,17,18 mph. I thought I didn’t know Steve was so competitive! So there we go sweating away for miles, till we get to our turning and Steve follows the man straight on! I shout out Steve where you going? It turns out he thought it was me ahead of him! He’ll follow anyone it seems.

Human nature seems to want an allegiance to something because we are looking for glory, something that takes us beyond the everyday and into a world of meaning and purpose. Maybe it’s our team winning the premiership glory, our favourite diva top of the charts – whatever it is, it is glory we seek.

Why do we look for a pale imitation of glory when we can have the real thing?

Paul says in verse 6:

“has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ”

Who do you want to follow? I want to follow Jesus. I want to see His glory. How about you?

Can we trust him and obey? Yes because of all he has done for us.

So is that it – we just tick the box “follower of Jesus” on our profile and get on with life? I’m afraid not. Because Jesus is Lord and He is very demanding. He is not content with a part of you – he wants all of you.

Paul is so radical he uses the word “slave” to describe himself - a slave for the sake of Jesus and others. There used to be a phrase going round in my youth “if Jesus is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all”.

It also reminds me of a sketch I saw in a meeting when I was young. In the sketch people were coming to give there offering on a big brass collection plate. The first person puts down a £5 note to approval of the audience (remember it was the 70s) then someone puts down a £10 note, to gasps in the auditorium. Finally a boy comes up who appears to have nothing, but instead he takes the plate from the man, places it on the floor and stands on it. He is giving his whole self.

Jesus wants our allegiance to be total. That means whatever He calls you to do, you will do it; you will serve Him in any way you can.

James Bond, the fictional spy, always describes himself as OHMS – on her majesty’s service. Our own real life David Huntley signs himself on his emails as “in His Master’s service” – check it out!

How do we do it?

Paul describes it in uncompromising terms in verse 4:

“and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus’ sake”

One of the ways we serve God is by serving others. When we did the vision day one of the things that came through strongly is that every single member of the church is called to serve in various different ways. It cannot be the few serving the many, but rather the many serving the many.

What is God calling you to do inside and outside the church? Often God uses our natural inclinations and abilities to guide. If we are good at admin and enjoy it, then maybe God has called to assist his kingdom by making sure everything runs smoothly. If you are good at hospitality and catering, maybe God has called you to use that in his service. Maybe you like working with kids, or you like explaining things to people, or maybe you just like fixing things. All things can be used for God’s glory. In all these things we can have a share in distributing his grace. Because – Jesus Christ is Lord.

We are going to spend some time doing a quick questionnaire where you can indicate what your gifts and talents are AND to indicate which of those you COULD offer to help in the work and mission of this church. Box 1 is for skills and gift you have, box 2 is for things you would like to offer. You can also write a comment.

It is a joy to serve the Lord. It is gratifying, satisfying, fulfilling, and pleasing to Him who is the Lord of all. So let’s pray that God will guide us.

Let’s have a minute to reflect

Now let’s fill in our questionnaires.

Amen.