

New Kilpatrick

Sermon

19th January 2020

John 1:29-42

Spirit... may you be the kind of blessing... that leaves us restless... uncomfortable... challenged enough... to move from where we are... to where you call us... anew in the world... So be it... Amen

I received a new watch for my birthday a few weeks ago... and the least you need to know of what it does... is that it tells the time... It does a million other things beside... it measures my heart rate constantly... and I'm scared to look at it at the moment... It also gives me an ECG... which is something I didn't know I needed... and before the service there were no signs of atrial fibrillation...

It also tells me how many steps I take... how many calories I burn... and how much activity I do... and in truth it is the most encouraging thing I know... It is always telling me how well I'm doing... 'Only a few more steps and you'll achieve your daily award'... and there is a wee fanfare when I get there... "Come on Roddy... you can do it... You've got this... Great start... Way to go, you've ahead of where you were yesterday"... this is what it says to me constantly... No one else speaks to me like that... I feel hugely supported and affirmed... that someone cares...

I think I'm in love with my watch...

And along with the weather... all my emails... background noise warning... it also tells me when I should stand up... and when I should pause to breathe... it also has GPS and maps and when and where I can catch a train... It's a marvel... but it lacks one thing...

This very clever watch-come-personal-assistant... can't offer any explanation to life... and perhaps what we all seek... more than anything... is that... a sense of meaning and truth and depth... that brings worth to each of us... and no matter what else this watch *can* do... it *can't* do that...

But it isn't just watches... that fail in that capacity... There is a well known litany of ideas and movements and religions... that have failed to help us find what we are looking for...

Yet... every generation has been part of that search... It was there... in Jesus day... Indeed the very beginning of the gospel... begins with that search... claiming the attention of the first disciples... Clear on Jesus lips... is the question that begins every search... "What are you looking for?"...

There in black and white... waiting to be answered...

And the disciples hear it... and turn towards it... It is just waiting for a response... and the disciples do respond... but with perhaps the most peculiar of replies... a question in return for a question... "Where are you staying?"...

I beg your pardon?...

"Where are you staying?"... Does that make sense?... What kind of response is that?...

But of course... this is John's gospel... and so it isn't asking what we think it is asking... In truth... It is probably one of the more profound... and insightful questions in the Gospels...

John has a couple of big themes running through his gospel... light and dark... the I am sayings... (I am the bread of life etc)... and seeing... lots of stories about seeing... but the bigger theme centres round the word 'abide'...

And probably in our heads we are catching some of John's words in phrases like... "I abide in my father... and my father abides in me"... "Abide in me that all may be one"... For John the whole idea of abiding is about being in something... being part of... having your meaning in something...

So when the disciples ask... where are you staying... they are not asking Jesus where he has set up home... what they are actually asking is the far more important question... where do you abide... where might we find you... where is your spirit dwelling... your truth being made known... your love shared... where do you abide... where will we find you in the world...

And Jesus simply says... "Come and see"... an invitation to adventure... to discover the places... where love is revealed... justice is being done... communities are being opened... heaven is set free... and bread is broken...

Come and see... and I will show you... every day... the possibilities... the places of hope... where I abide... where love changes folk... where compassion transforms the world... There you will find me... abiding... revealing... living... resurrecting... breaking... calling...

And in answering the question... the disciples move out of the circle of John the Baptist... and join Jesus... and their eyes are opened to all the places love abides... makes a home... in the lives of the outcast... the feared... the ill... the stranger... as the gospel unfolds...

And with those same disciple eyes... are we not to look... and find... where Jesus abides too... where love touches and transforms this contemporary world...

“What are you looking for”... is the core question we are set up to respond to... In everything we do as a church... is it not our very reason for being here... to say... here is where truth is outed... where renewal is offered... where healing is offered... where belonging is given and where love abides...

It is how we shape our community... or at least try to...

Come and see... our welcome... it is the first place the world will find Jesus... in a spirit of openness and hospitality... How we do that... is the measure of where Jesus abides... where Jesus is found...

Come and see... our creativity... the ability to give life to things... the imagination and desire to create a new kind of community... shaped by grace and hope and compassion... How we do that... is the measure of where Jesus abides... where love is revealed...

Come and see... our relationships... with the diversity of our whole community... founded on love of neighbour... There is the measure of where Jesus abides... where love is known...

Come and see... the family we are... and the place for all generations of family... and the great tangle of opinion each generation brings that shapes this community... There is the measure of where Jesus abides... where love is discovered...

Come and see... that depth of living... that craves meaning and acceptance and healing for all our hurts... that wellbeing... There is a measure of where Jesus abides... where love is displayed...

Come and see... what we say... what we communicate... the story we tell and continue to be part of... There is the measure of where Jesus abides... where love is inaugurated...

What are you looking for?...

Well... where are you staying, O Jesus... where do you abide... where is love revealed, touched, engaged?...

Is it not our calling... to shape this parish as a place where love abides... in all these ways?...

So that... in the question: where is love made known... where do you abide... we offer only one phrase... Jesus own... his invitation to the whole gospel... the one round which we are to shape our whole congregational life and adventure with our parish... simply... clearly... intriguingly...

Where do you abide?...

Come and See...