

Summary of Joanna's 1st 'Disciples of Christ' sermon (01/14)

Being, growing and making disciples of Jesus Christ

Please ask yourself

- **What does this theme mean to me?**
- Is my life being transformed by Jesus and can others see it?
- Am I growing spiritually, changing and being effective as Jesus' disciple?
- How have I changed and become more like Jesus in the last year?

Let's be really honest with ourselves and each other. I know we are alive, but are we alive and kicking? I want us to be fruitful, to be knowing God better, and knowing ourselves better

Jesus talked about a fig tree being in leaf but not having any figs. It was growing, it had branches and leaves. It was alive but produced no fruit, and what happened to it? Jesus cursed it! It shrivelled up and died. **Where is your fruit?**

It is important that all our teaching is undergirded by God's word. It is given for us to learn and grow, and in 2 Tim 3:16 & 17 it says it is for 'reproof' which means to check us, to correct us, put us back on track, to train us in righteousness-to help us be like Jesus. **Expect** in the year to come in the sermon series and group studies **teaching that will challenge and change** you by the power of God's word and his Holy Spirit in you.

Bring your bible to church and a note pad, or your ipad or tablet, so you can make a note of something that strikes you, a question you want to ask or something you need to go away and pray about, **God may be wanting you to grow and change in a particular way, to know him better.** It is easy when you have been a Christian for a few years to lose your sparkle and passion, your

enquiring mind. We get comfortable, but I want for all of us to **intentionally engage with the teaching** and see what God is saying and challenging in us, in our relationship with him.

I believe this is a **new season of challenge and change**, of greater awareness of the work of God in us, of his work of growth and fruitfulness in us. I believe it is my job, as your Vicar and spiritual guide to help encourage this in you, and also for us to help each other in this way.

Let's start with 2 simple questions~

What is a disciple? Am I a disciple? Some answers might be a learner, follower, an apprentice, someone who listens and obeys? Jewish boys would complete their initial schooling at about 10. Then they would learn a family trade, be apprentices. If they had shown real potential the boys could be moved on instead to learn to be scribes and judges from about 14. The most capable would go on to be trained as a Rabbi and they would need to apply to be a disciple of a rabbi. He would have a group of learners/apprentices who would be with him for many years learning what he taught, listening to his every word, trying to be like him.

This is how we are to be **disciples of Jesus Christ**, but not just intellectually as a student learning from the rabbi. A disciple of Jesus is something far deeper. We should want to learn not just **about** Jesus but to learn to **know Jesus** to be like him, and live like him.

In John 1:35-42 two men are following Jesus so he turns around and asks them, 'What are you looking for?' What do you want? They want to follow Jesus more closely and ask him where he will be staying.

Ask yourself '**What am I looking for?** What do I want in life?' I believe it is God's Spirit in us that faces us with this question at every new crossroad of our lives. Every time we have to make a decision or a crisis occurs, **Jesus is asking, 'Where do I fit in your life?'** This is our Christian journey which often begins without

us realising, without us asking, but something draws us. It can be shaken off by inaction, or circumstances in our life and put on hold, but **Jesus comes to us again and asks, What are you looking for?** Jesus just replied to the two men, 'Come and see'. He invited them into his life, just as we are invited into Jesus' life. He wants us to know him. Look at Jeremiah 29:11-14a. See how v12 God says when you call on me, start looking for me, searching for me, **YOU WILL FIND ME**, as long as you seek me with **ALL** your heart-not just your head, your intellect, not just head knowledge, but heart experience, your spirit, your inner self, your whole being, who you are, then you will find God, when you begin to take him seriously, when faith gets personal and God gets 'up close'.

As more mature Christians Jesus asks you, 'What are you looking for? What are your priorities? Can you feel God pursuing you and searching you out? Jesus was different when he called people to follow him. A rabbi's disciples would be well educated, whereas Jesus called ordinary, common folk, every day people to be his followers, his friends, and his disciples-**those who knew their need of him**. Jesus welcomes us, '**come as you are, but don't expect to stay as you are**-expect a challenge on this journey of ever deepening discipleship. May we all respond to this call and rise to this challenge with trust and faith in our loving heavenly Father who knows us well.

Joanna