

1 Corinthians 2:1-end Matthew 5:13-16
Attributes of a Disciple of Christ (Feb 9th)

vs 1 & 2 Paul writing to the Corinthian Christians says he doesn't want to proclaim the 'mystery of God' using clever speech, or worldly wisdom. He wants to speak plainly and simply about Jesus and him crucified. At Athens he had tried to discuss and debate about Christianity and God with the Athenian contemporary philosophers, speaking in their own language, using their own terms but it hadn't worked. **What do you think the mystery of God is?** I believe it is the deep things of God that he has prepared for us, planned for us, purposed for us because he loves us. 'Mystery' doesn't mean it's a secret, rather it isn't easily understood. It's about God's plan to bring out the best in us that he placed within us when he created us and brought us into being, long long ago.

v9 No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived what God has prepared for those who LOVE God. This is God's plan for all of us whom he loves.

An aspect that isn't hidden about the mystery of God is that he wanted a relationship with us-amazing! **1st attribute-disciples are known and loved by God and can know and love God themselves**-we have part of the mystery revealed to us already. The revelation of the mystery of God is yet to be completed, and it will be glorious and awesome when he does-but may not be until we die.

2nd attribute-a disciple of Christ knows simply what it means to be a disciple.

First of all we are enquirers where we find out more, then believers and then followers. We learn that Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for our sins. Someone had to die and Jesus took our place. This is God's mercy-where we don't get what we deserve to get-that is death and eternal damnation, life without God.

Next comes the grace and love~where we get so much more than we ever could have deserved~forgiveness. We need to accept and claim that forgiveness personally-thank him for a fresh new start, a relationship with God, and life instead of death, eternally when we die and now whilst we live.

So then there comes a point where we make a personal commitment, where we accept and thank him for being our Saviour, we give our lives to him, to become an apprentice and life long learner-a disciple and we spend the rest of our lives becoming more like him.

3rd attribute of being a disciple of Christ is knowing what difference it makes to you and your life personally? How often do you think about being a disciple of Christ? Has it slipped into the background? Lost it's significance?

Isaiah 58:6-8a illustrates the active, social, lived-out Gospel that makes a difference to others. Can you see the Gospel isn't just about personal, individual salvation, *my* salvation, but how the kingdom of God is expressed here on earth as it is heaven?

4th attribute of a disciple of Christ is living out these gospel values like caring for the homeless, the hungry, the oppressed, the naked so that society in which we live and work is affected by us and through us.

How will those who don't attend church hear the message of the Gospel, the good News of Jesus Christ?

Sean Fugill leads the Charity Partner Support team through which we support our partners abroad~ Children's Vision in Bogata and Plateau Perspectives in Tibet, and then here in Morpeth-the Wansbeck Valley Foodbank, WERS, The Church Army in Shiremoor, and The Children's Society. There are no excuses for not knowing what to be involved in. Sean when reflecting on discipleship expressed through this team said, '*The work we support expresses Christ's love and care through positive and relevant action as well as through words-however the group*

challenges members of our church to respond to Christ's call to love our neighbour by involving themselves in these activities.'

They would like more people to support them and work with them as they arrange the fundraising events, and they would love new people to come onto the CPS team.

Here we have an excellent opportunity for us all to get more involved. Are you wondering how you can be a faithful disciple of Christ? Well here are several ways to fulfil the call to be a disciple, involving your lives in others' lives who don't know God's love and salvation.

Being a disciple of Christ is sharing the gospel by living the Gospel daily, moving it from our heads to our hearts, then letting it move from there to our mouths or hands or feet-**being Jesus in the world** to go and take the gospel out of the church and into the world.

Some people have said to me already 'I'm not an evangelist I can't share the gospel'-that is not true -that's what Satan wants you to believe. We are all witnesses-we should all be able to talk about our relationship with Jesus. In the famous words of St Francis, 'Preach the gospel and if necessary use words'. Just go and be like Jesus.

So what helps us be a disciple of Christ? Back to 1 Corinthians 2 v 10 'These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit'. This is how we know and understand, this is how we have come to faith, accepted Jesus as our Lord, God's Holy Spirit revealed it to us. Those who without the Spirit of God are 'merely human', the 'unspiritual' are lacking that extra something, they just 'don't get it'. Have you had that experience? People are so unchurched, so seemingly far from God, so indifferent, they just don't see the need for a Saviour, a faith. Paul says they didn't understand it in his day either, which is why they killed Jesus, the King of Glory. v12 We have received not the spirit of the world, but of God. So our faith is dependent on God, and the power of God, not on our

own knowledge or human wisdom, not on our cleverness, but on the power of God working in us

5th attribute of a disciples of Christ is growing and maturing to be more holy and like Jesus

Remember I asked you 2 weeks ago, are we growing, are we fruitful, or just busy and productive growing branches and leaves? Being mature doesn't mean we have made it, that we are finished or complete, because there is always more to learn and know of God and living our faith.

v12b 'We then who are spiritual, have the Spirit from God to understand the gifts he bestows on us. Without the work of the Spirit there won't be such growth and maturity as the truth is incomprehensible-there is no communication between our spirit and God's. This is how the 'mystery' can seem like a secret, hidden, we don't understand.

We need to seek God's Spirit as we come to church, as we open our bibles at home, as we sit and learn together in house groups.

I want us at Mitford to be a mature church, to be mature disciples. A priority for mature disciples is to still be growing, learning and moving on. I ask again-**How have you grown in the last year?**

How would you know if you are growing, what are you looking for? We show we are Christ's disciples when we are becoming more and more like him, changing our bad or lazy or unloving habits, or when we love our neighbours as ourselves and reach out to them, go to them, get to know them, and by knowing and loving God more, growing that relationship with him daily, knowing our bible better, praying more deeply, more naturally, when it's more intertwined and intuitive in our everyday life, not just on Sundays, or when it suits us,

This process of transformation, changing or sanctification (ie being made holy, like Jesus, made ready for when we see him) is life long.

Our maturity is shown here by our willingness to be open to God's Spirit. It is easy after being a Christian for several years and longer to become complacent, to rest on our laurels, to feel that we have 'arrived'.

So let's stop and pray about this right now.

Where do we need to seek God's forgiveness as a disciple? for not being obedient or diligent in any of these areas of our lives? for being unloving of our neighbour, colleague or friend when we don't share our faith? in being complacent about maturing, growing and being fruitful?

Where do we need to seek God's spirit to help us?

What is he revealing to us right now, what is he saying to us this morning?

Where do we need to change? to grow?

Or perhaps you feel you need to start right at the beginning and become a disciple for the first time.

Let's face up to the deep things of God, open our lives to his Holy Spirit and discover afresh what it means for us this morning to be a disciple of Christ. Amen