

## PRAYER

Father may these spoken words be faithful to the written word and lead us into the living word, Jesus Christ our Lord - Amen

## SERMON

I was late meeting my friends for lunch, rushing around and throwing things into my handbag, but I could not find my phone anywhere. I search high and low but no phone. By now I was very late so I just ran off without my phone. I arrived at the cafe, opened my bag and ... yes, you've guessed it, there was my phone inside my bag. I just couldn't see it for looking. But sometimes it's not just things we cannot see for looking, sometimes its people. There were many lovely people in my congregation at St Mary's Lymm but when I had surgery last year it was Angela, who had always been quiet, one of the crowd, largely overlooked, who really came and helped me practically and emotionally. I was ashamed I didn't see her for looking amidst the crowd.

John the Baptist did see Jesus for looking as the son of God, the messiah before he baptised him but, in our gospel, reading this morning, he tells the world "***I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'*** <sup>34</sup> ***I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One.***"

I wonder hearing that how many that day could **not see Jesus for looking amidst the crowd**. John points Jesus out to two of his own disciples, who went with Jesus and spent the night with him. One of these was Andrew (who subsequently became one of Jesus' disciples). Andrew had looked and seen Jesus for who he was. He had grasped the significance of his encounter with Jesus. The first thing Andrew did the following day was to see his brother Simon and say that he had seen the messiah

I wonder what Simon thought, but he was convinced, or curious enough, to go with Andrew to see Jesus. When Jesus saw him, he gave Simon a new name Cephas, Peter meaning the rock. In New Testament times the meaning of a person's name was very important. The name was a sign of the person's character and authority. But for most of their time together Peter wasn't much of a rock. A rock is stable and strong but Peter was weak and waivered even to the point of denying he knew Jesus three times. **Yet Jesus saw him for who he was, for what he was, what he would become** We know with hindsight that Peter became the bedrock of the Christian faith

But our reading this morning happened before Peter, Andrew and the others left their homes to follow Jesus. But **could they see for looking** what cost it would be to follow him? They had to **learn** what it meant to be a follower of Jesus to the very end, to the death on the cross his resurrection and ascension. Jesus promised he would come again and **I wonder if we would see him for looking when he does come again.**

The early church believed Christ's second coming would be soon and they were desperate to be ready for him. The church in Corinth in our New Testament reading is anxious to be worthy of Christ.

Corinth stood in a strategic position to control trade across the narrow neck of land between the Aegean and Adriatic seas. It was a thriving centre of commerce and a cosmopolitan city where people of various nationalities mixed and mingled. There was a ferocious pecking order. Only the upper-class elite mattered. Everyone else was of no consequence. The Christian church in Corinth, like the city was socially and racially mixed. There were a few Jews, but mainly Gentiles, ranging from slaves to upwardly mobile office holders. There were none of the superior elite. There was a general feeling of inferiority and unworthiness.

Paul constantly thanks God for the grace God has given the Corinthians in Jesus Christ, Perhaps picking up on their feelings of inadequacy he emphasises that Christ has given them gifts necessary for their ministry as they wait for his second coming. ***He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*** our gospel reading says ***They cannot see this for looking.*** This is a radical change to their world view. In a society where the non-elite were judged to be socially and politically insignificant, to Jesus they matter. Paul says that None of God's children should feel inadequate, inferior, unworthy or afraid, because Christ gave them gifts to help them live their lives in his light. ***They would see him for looking when he comes again.***

Corinth is not so very different in its social and economic mix of people than our own country. Do we feel inadequate and not good enough as the people in Corinth felt as they strived to be worthy of Jesus? Do we need the same encouragement Paul gave to the Corinthians that Christ equips us, gives us skills and gifts to fulfil his work here on earth

**Sometimes it is hard to see for looking.** We look to Jesus but perhaps we do not always see him in ourselves, in others how he is at work in our lives and how we can help him be at work in the lives of strangers. **Perhaps we cannot see for looking** the opportunities for random acts of kindness in Christ's name we can give to those whom we do not know, who are not like us. Perhaps we feel inadequate or shy, too weak to do this, but Christ equips us, gives us skills and gifts to fulfil his work here on earth until he comes again. Peter wasn't a very stable or strong rock on that day he met Jesus for the first time **Yet Jesus saw him for who he was, for what he was, what he would become he could see him for looking** and despite his weaknesses Peter became the rock on which our church was built. Despite our weaknesses **Jesus sees us for who we are, for what we may become he sees us for looking.** With the grace of God, the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, we are the rocks on which his church continues to be built this day and every day until Jesus when comes again **Amen**