

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups.

February 4th 2007

Focus: Digging deeper in John's first letter

Theme: Laying down Love



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

1 John 3.16 – 4.6 My dear friends

I am writing to tell you about love. The way in which we come to understand and experience love is through Jesus Christ. He sacrificed his life for us.

This is why we, you and I, ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers and not just be out for ourselves. If you see someone else needs something and you do nothing about it, what do you think happens to God's love? (you end up hiding it away) Look friends, lets not just talk about love, let's practice real love. Let's do it. And when we practice love to others we ourselves will be bold and free before God because we're doing what he wants. Another thing, don't believe everything you hear. Think carefully about what people tell you. The true test is this; Jesus was a real human but also the Son of God, a spiritual man. And that same Jesus died on the cross for our sins, yours and mine. Remember this and you will live a great life. Your friend John

Love is cross-shaped.

There is hardly a verse in the New Testament that speaks of God's love that does not speak (or the context speaks) of the cross. Look up John 3.16, Galatians 2.20, Romans 5.8, 1 John 4.10

God's love as seen on the cross has the special character of self-sacrifice for those who are totally undeserving and undesirous of the sacrifice. Jesus laid down his life for us so that we may be free. John says "you go and practice this sort of love". We are to lay down our lives for him and for one another so that they may walk free. Not many called to lay down their lives in terms of dying for another, although some are. BUT we need to love without counting the cost, without any thought of return, without weighing up first whether such love is deserved, a love that is entirely without self-interest. This giver of such great love, Jesus, is often maligned and misrepresented. We are also called to stand up for Him, to give account of Him. This can be costly too as we face ridicule and misunderstanding at one end of the scale and persecution at the other. Some times the circumstances we face seem uphold the cynicism of those who deny Jesus 'Why is there suffering? Why doesn't God answer prayers?' We are called to do deeper into God's love, to find him in the suffering around us. Do we really believe that Jesus Died for us and that God raised him to life? Do we strive to find his resurrection power in our situations?

Witness: Questions to discuss



1. What do you understand by the term "love is cross-shaped?"
 2. Do you think that is true?
 3. Is it true of your love for others?
 4. How can you, as an individual, or as a group, make your love more cross-shaped?
 5. What would you do if you found yourself sitting next to a tramp in church or if you found someone sleeping rough in your porch?
 6. What are the criticisms you hear of Christianity how would you respond?
- 7 We often look for rational explanations for deep question. How does Jesus love on the cross answer criticisms of him?

Please spend some time thinking and praying for those Christians who are in real physical danger: for example, in Pakistan, in Iraq, in Indonesia, in the Sudan etc. Remember especially Jeremy and Kate Ellis (Pakistan) and Tricia Wick (Sudan) Spend some time Praying for Ben Mulholland on life support machine and his family Ros Peter and Charlotte this week.