

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups Sept 9th 2007

Hidden- Paul

Acts 9:1-22



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

God's plans and purposes for the life of worship and witness of our church are far 'deeper, wider, higher than ours. His call to us is to live out lives of faith in both the now and not yet of his kingdom, in the known and unknown. Read Isaiah 55:6-11

Sometimes God's plans and purposes are only too apparent yet at other times it can seem hard to discern his hand at work and where he is leading. He can seem far away and hidden. Elijah, Paul, Elisha, Mary and the 72 were but a few of the many Biblical figures who discovered this hiddenness of God, this "secret wisdom." Read 1 Cor 2:7.

Last week we pondered the still small voice of God encountered by Elijah once the wind, earthquake and fire passed. This week we travel from Mt Horeb to Damascus and meet Paul.

Damascus in the first century was the hub of a vast commercial network of trade routes. Paul the zealous and passionate young Pharisee knew this and recognized that the city as being significant to God's' plans and purposes. If this new sect of Christianity could be wiped out in Damascus it could be prevented from spreading across the Roman Empire.

Paul was indeed in the right place at the right time but initially God's plans and purposes were hidden from him. Far from persecuting the Christians in Damascus, in a few days time Paul would be baptized as one of them. Far from breathing murderous threats, in a few days time he would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Far from seeing Jesus as a heretical rebel in a few days time he would encounter him as the Living Son of God. At the heart of this encounter is the most amazing conversation between Paul and Jesus – read v 3 -6.

Brought to his knees, blinded by the light, lead like a child, it was as if Saul was dying and with echoes of the resurrection Paul was born - again! – read Acts 9:17 -19. This term God may want to give you and me a little shove and/or bring us to our knees that we might know more of him and his ways and his love for us.

As Amanda says in the background to the theme in our termly booklets "there are times, then, when God disappears behind or beyond the very things we do that seem, to us, to be serving Him. He becomes hidden and we can become confused. We will not find Him in 'the doing,' we find him instead when we come to the end of ourselves and are still before Him. So, as we look for the 'hidden' God, and of what it means to come into His presence and receive His revelation, we grow in our love of Him. We seek to worship Him more deeply, rather than seek for more of what we can 'get out' of Him."



Witness: questions to discuss

Worship – using the model of our VST time of Worship led by Amanda. Pray for the Lord Jesus to be present by the Holy Spirit. Read 1 Kings 19:1 -13. Sing be still. Spend 5 mins in silence.

Do you find it hard to discern where God is at work in your life? Does he seem far away and hidden? Share times when this may have been true for you.

What is it that prevents you from 'seeing' Jesus?

Have you ever encountered Jesus in a powerful and life changing way?