

Coach House Church BEACONS

OUR VIEW OF GOD

21ST AUGUST 2020

Can I ask a question? What is your view of God?

Maybe, you don't have one, maybe, if you do, it's derived from the pictures that great artists produced, with a white bearded man leaning down from the clouds with lightning flashing from his fingertips?

Maybe, your experience of God is a loving father who has comforted you in a time of need, or maybe it is of a distant figure who has no meaning to us at all, because He was all about Israel wasn't, he?

We shouldn't be surprised to find that we might all have a different view of God, after all, if you asked for everyone's opinion on anyone, they would differ entirely, mainly because of our experience.

It's Andy here again with another Coach House Beacon, and today I was chatting to someone about their experience with teachers.... Bear with me, it will make sense, because I want to show that what we think about something or someone can be achieved by what we are told but, what we KNOW about someone or something is derived from our experience.

We were talking about various teachers that we have come across in our school years. Some were officious and demanded that you address them with full titles, others were less demanding and tried to be our friends. The focus of their attention however, was to get us to a point of education by whatever means. It is strange that when I look back at my school years and even my training for the police force years later, it was the disciplined, demanding teachers and trainers that gained my respect most. It was their desire to push me beyond myself and my ingrained limitations, that created the lasting impression Well actually that isn't entirely true, there was another condition that was required for all this to work

together for good ... and that was Love. These teachers knew what we needed, knew what was best for us and it developed our characters along the way – but it was never hurtful or spiteful, in fact some of the best care I ever experienced was from the so-called tough trainer, who demanded discipline and effort. When I genuinely could not achieve something, but had tried anyway, they were the ones who came alongside with gentle encouragement and genuine concern. It was a strange mixture, but one that they had honed over their years. They had learnt how to get the best out of all the students that came to them. I left school with a profound respect for the teachers that the newer students were in fear of (because of the stories they were told from older brothers and sisters usually!) I remember having the same fear of the same teachers when I first went to school, but I also know how I changed.

My first view was formed out of head knowledge – what I had been told by others – the other is far deeper understanding and is a heart towards someone – and that comes from experience.

When the Bible talks about knowing God, it is talking about the deep heartfelt, experiential knowledge that comes from close intimacy.

After all, the bible tells us to:

'Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!' This passage is taken from the book of Psalms. The Psalms are a large collection of songs and prayers, used by the Israelites to worship and honour God. They can be viewed as heartfelt conversations with God, although some of them contain some pent-up frustration with the circumstances the writers find themselves in! But hey! We all go through frustrating times, right? Isn't it good to know then, that God can take our frustrations and listen to them?

The good thing is that through all these Psalms, the one thing that the writers return to is the fact that God is Good.

God is Good, when things are going well, God is Good when things are not going so well, and God is still Good when we are in the deepest darkest experiences of life. How do I know? Because I've experienced it – I know it to be true.

So how can God be good all the time, and yet also be a judge and disciplinarian? Well, I hope my experiences from my school years and police training have helped to show how it all works hand in hand.

Let's put it this way:

My life without God is heading where I deserve it to head. Now before anyone spits out their coffee and exclaims that we can't possibly be heading for hell because that just isn't fair, well I have to say that it is fair – tell me, have you ever had to tell a child how to be naughty? We might have led them through bad examples, but the truth is we know how to be bad – it is ingrained in us. We are born with it. Now this may seem unfair as we have no choice, but this is what we have been handed because the choice was given, a long time ago, and Adam and Eve chose to disobey God.

That being the case, sin, as we call being disobedient to God, has been handed down to us throughout the generations and we all try and make excuses for it and justify our actions (some of you maybe even trying to do that right now!)

The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6 v 23) , so by that reckoning we all deserve death.

Now if that was the end of it, it would be a tragic tale and not one worth writing a beacon about, but this is how God shows that He is good all the time.

When we can do nothing about our sinful state, like I said before we are born with it, we cannot turn it on and off, or make amends for the bad things we have done ... God chose to.

In the Psalms we talked about earlier, 14 times in the first 50 Psalms, you will read descriptions of Gods hatred towards sinners and His wrath towards liars and so on and so on.

The sad fact is that we could put our names before these accusations – it is us as sinners, that God will pour His wrath out upon but wait.

God allows us to be saved. Now us Christians throw this term around like confetti, but to many, it is meaningless.

So here is the head knowledge and heart knowledge bit.

The term 'saved' means what? What are we saved from?

To someone who has experienced it, it means everything, but to someone who has not experienced it, it is...well something Christians like to talk about....A lot!

The truth is that we are saved from God himself.

Think about it. We deserve wrath, but God makes a plan whereby we don't have to suffer the indignity and darkness of death, but offers us a new chance of life.

You cannot do anything about being born in sin, it is beyond our control, so God shows that He is good and just, by providing a way out for us. He provides payment for sin and directs His wrath away from us and onto the sin bearer. That sin bearer was Jesus, Gods own son – a substitute for us, who suffered all of Gods punishment and took it upon himself so that we would not have to. Instead we are given a new perspective and focus – life without the fear of punishment and death.

What we have been saved from by God's grace, is God himself.

Now all of this means nothing unless we experience it for ourselves.

We can play along with the worldview thrust upon us that God isn't real and Jesus is just a crutch to help weak people through life, or we can taste and see that God is Good.

Knowing Jesus, isn't just reading about him, having an opinion about him, it is having a relationship with Him, experiencing His love and care.

Don't rely on your head knowledge, it just gives you an opinion

What I experience in my position, is that people in church, are all different and therefore opinions will differ and sometimes they will create argument and fall outs. But I also see a common knowledge in that we accept that God is good and we are not!

It is God who gives us the direction and determination to see things through. That isn't weakness. It takes a man to stand up and recognise that we need help.

God reached out to us, moved towards us, when we were fast running away from Him, and gave us the very thing that we could not ever attain by our own efforts...

LIFE for ever, and an answer to our emptiness.

When I think back to my teachers and trainers, the ones I respect most acted out of love. They didn't need to help me better myself, they wanted to.

God wants to help us – we just need to recognise it and accept it.

Taste and see that the Lord is good (all the time)



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