

Coach House Church BEACONS

NO ENTRY

21ST OCTOBER 2020

On Sunday at our service in church, Jamie selected a worship song which had a profound effect. It was a song that I had heard previously, but not recently and it was so good to be reminded of it. It was a song called Who You Say I Am which has Words and Music by Ben Fielding & Reuben Morgan.

Some of the poignant lines within it say:

Who am I that the highest King

Would welcome me

In my Father's house

There's a place for me

I'm a child of God

Yes I am

I am who You say I am

The words brought to mind a couple of main thoughts:

Firstly, the certainty of the statements in the song is in sharp contrast to the backdrop of the uncertainty of our present situation with Covid. Secondly, that I am a child of God who has benefitted from the stability of growing up in a strong church family.

This week there has been endless discussions about the next steps in the battle against Covid, with debate and argument about the possible ways forward, relentlessly portrayed through the media. This has been coupled with the end of a very tiring half term which began with some caution and ends with similar uncertainties that we had back in March. So, in effect, a very long week of the unknown- all debate and discussions being as clear as mud! And the way forward seems to be a foreboding 'No Entry' sign. A list of regulations and restrictions on daily life and of meeting up with family and friends, of not being allowed to move

forward, of every move dependent on reading the small print to see what is permissible.

Yet this song's lyrics reminded me of the stability, the security, the certainty provided if we stop looking at the here and now, and our efforts to create solutions, to second guess the outcomes of various measures and, instead start to lift our eyes to God, our Father. There is a bigger picture at play, God is still Sovereign, and God holds the keys to all unknowns as our creator and has provided our Saviour in his son, Jesus. As a Christian, this is the basis of our faith, our trust in someone higher and wiser who holds the blue prints to the whole of our lives. See Psalm 139 for encouraging words of how God knows us intimately. Our hope is in our Saviour Jesus who has already made the way forward, long term. The 'No entry' sign was removed when he died and rose again, when the curtain in the temple was ripped apart, when the stone was rolled away from the entrance to the tomb, when he ascended to heaven and when his perfect sacrifice was accepted in place of our unworthiness and our failings.

It was like a relief swept over us to remember that the things out of our grasp are still under God's ultimate control. There are promises made for us. In Romans 8:14 it reminds us that God's holy spirit within us is our great comforter as well as proof of belonging.

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children[gl] of God.15 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children.[h] Now we call him, "Abba, Father." [i] 16 For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And, in Galatians 3 it talks about the restrictions of the old laws set down by God to the children of Israel. The laws that had to be fulfilled in order to gain entry to God's presence are now superseded by Jesus. It begins in verse 23: 23 Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed. 24 Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. 25 And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian.

Sometimes we just need a nudge to remember how important we are to God and how much was sacrificed by Jesus on our behalf.

Our church history began in the 1950s with a vision being given by God to a man who saw a need, firstly establishing a boys' club then expanding to a girls' club and then to a church. As you would expect over this timescale, there have been many changes but the original vision prevails: to provide a church which is accessible to anyone and which will provide a sense of belonging to the family of God while pointing to Jesus as our only hope for forgiveness and access to Almighty God. I have the benefit of being part of the church family since I was born in late December, 1963. And the words of the song above, reminded me of what a privilege that has been. The sense of family has been strong, of belonging, of security and safety. I have great memories of friendships and specific moments that stick with you forever, where you can see the spirit of God move and influence lives.

Hebrews 12 talks of the great crowd of witnesses and through the years I feel I have experienced part of this crowd who have lived out God's love to others, in their care and concern, in their testimony to God's mercy and grace. There have been great moments when the whole church have come together to bring heartfelt prayers before God. Many will remember the all night prayer meeting organised by Eric Swindells, praying for the persecuted church behind the iron curtain. Then many years later, amazingly, the wall came down!

I work with some children and young people who sadly don't know what it is to experience stability in their homes and lives, who don't have lovely childhood memories and who don't have role models that can be relied upon. I am truly grateful that as a child growing up in the church I have had so many positive memories and people who have quietly influenced my faith.

The good thing is that anyone can be a child of God and it isn't determined by your past experience. Galatians 3 goes on to say:

26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. 28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

We are children of God, not because of what we are able to do but, because God made it possible. Our past does not determine our future- our faith and trust in Jesus as our Saviour guides our future path.

Hebrews 10 encourages to approach God boldly, to speak out and talk to him, to ask and to praise. As part of the family of God we approach not with an air of exaggerated entitlement or presumption but rather as a child asking a father for help, support, comfort and advice. We have a deep sense of gratitude for daily mercies and an understanding of 'there by the grace of God' and not by our own merits. The way to Almighty God doesn't come with a 'no entry' sign. Jesus made the way possible. With this attitude and understanding of God's grace towards us we can echo the words of the song:

***Who am I that the highest King
Would welcome me
In my Father's house
There's a place for me
I'm a child of God
Yes I am
I am who You say I am.***

Thank you.



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