

Coach House Church BEACONS

REFLECTIONS OF SELF

5TH FEBRUARY 2021

This is the first transition between years that I have not been on a church holiday with the folks from the Coach House up at Bassenfell Manor in the Lake District. For a number of years, we have celebrated the passing of one year into another by playing games and quizzing as a group of friends. The celebrations this year (last year?) had to be different as we stayed at home and couldn't mix and meet with our friends in the traditional way. We adapted, but I missed the comradery and fellowship and I also missed getting out and about in the beauty of the Lakes and mountains. Me and Mel made up for it with the odd walk from home, but it wasn't quite the same grandeur.

The other night I caught on TV 'a year in the life of Scafell', following the lives of farmers in and around the Eskdale and Wasdale valley surrounding Scafell Pike, the highest mountain in England. My only occasion to have visited Scafell was when I drove a minibus for the churches 24-hour 3 peak challenge. Ben Nevis, Scafell and Snowden in 24 hours!

Ben Nevis was completed in the afternoon light before we headed south to the lake district.

I didn't see much of the area around Scafell as we got there in the middle of the night and I remember cooking breakfast on a small stove as our intrepid mountaineers ran/walk/hobbled up Scafell in the dark, before we made off for Wales and the final challenge of Snowdon. In case you are wondering, we managed to complete the three peaks in under 24 hours (just!) but my lasting memory (apart from the snoring as I drove between countries) was of head torches bobbing around on the side of Scafell, lighting the way in the darkness – a topic of another beacon I am sure!

Anyway...back to the TV programme. As Mel and I watched it we were taken back to our many visits to the Lake District and the beauty of the place. Misty mountain tops, majestic peaks and the calmness of Lakeland waters, meres and tarns. Oh...and the one lake in the lake district – Bassenthwaite Lake.

The thing that struck me from some of the views on the TV programme were the reflections in the still water of the mountain peaks around, especially on Wastwater and Buttermere.

And, as always, it got me thinking.

When the waters were still, on peaceful calm days, the reflection of the mountain around were pure and perfect. You could take a photo and turn it upside down without knowing which was the mountain and which was the reflection – pardon the pun, but it was untarnished! Almost impossible to tell one from the other.

The Bible tells us that we also are supposed to reflect someone or something.

The Apostle Paul when he wrote the second of his letters to the church in Corinth, reminded the believers that people who do not believe in Jesus, have a veil over their eyes so that they cannot see properly, however he goes on to say in chapter 3 and verse 16...

2 Corinthians 3:16 (NLT)

But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So, all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

So, here we have a wonderful new understanding, that when we see Jesus and accept him, we have a veil removed which allows us to 'see' – our eyes are fully opened, and now we have the ability to reflect the Glory of God – and even greater still, the work of the Holy Spirit within us, refines and defines that reflection, so that we become more and more like Jesus – day by day.

We are like the still waters of the Lakeland water, perfectly reflecting the grandeur of the mountain peak. The water has no peak or grandeur in itself, but it has the ability for others to see the beauty reflected in it.

Now, I sense that all of us, if you are anything like me, would like for others to see this reflected Glory in us all the time. We tend to think we know what others see in us and we sometimes convince ourselves that it is better than we ought. Sometimes, we can be guilty of thinking that the good things people see in us is actually us!

The waters, and we, only reflect the real Glory. If I was to put my hand into the water to touch the mountain, I could not. My hand would sink below the surface and the reflection would disappear. The reality is the water, the image imprinted on it is the Glory. **The water is not a mountain, but it can reflect a mountain for others to see!**

The reflection only exists in the pure, undefiled moments of our lives. When we act out of ourselves, it is like a pebble being thrown into the lake, the ripples disrupt the image, it becomes indistinct, disturbed, difficult to define and what people see is a distorted view of Jesus. This is why we need to develop a culture of honesty and transparency in our churches. We don't always reflect very well at all, but we shouldn't give up.

I had to admit to acting in a very poor way the other day, and did not reflect the Glory of God at all, rather the shame and tainted picture of my true self.

I'm not alone though, even King David, cried out in desperation:

Psalm 119:5 (NLT)

Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your decrees!

King David was very aware of his failings and that he didn't always reflect God, but his desire was that he would do so. We see this throughout the Bible, which should encourage us to keep on, keeping on. Jesus himself, countered the religious leaders of the day, who thought that they had everything sorted and put countless rules and regulations in place to try and control others to their standards. Jesus simply called them white washed tombs, that looked nice on the outside but hid a hardened and stubborn heart, inclined to self rather than God.

The Apostle Paul, as we have already seen, urges us to reflect the Glory of God and allow the Holy Spirit to change us to do this more readily day by day.

When Paul wrote to his friend Titus to encourage him in his pastorship of the church in Crete we read:

Titus 2:6 (NLT)

In the same way, encourage the young men to live wisely. And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching. Teach the truth so that your teaching can't be criticized. Then those who oppose us will be ashamed and have nothing bad to say about us.

It is of upmost importance that we have a true understanding of what people are seeing in us. As Paul implies in the passage, we have to work at letting the good stuff, outweigh the bad stuff. Let God's Glory overcome the image we and others have of self. One of our problems as human beings is that we like to look at our own reflection in the hope that we like what we see, sometimes we do, sometimes we don't, but I can guarantee one thing.

If we were to position ourself at the side of that still lake reflected the grandeur of the mountain, so we can lean over to see our reflection, what we would see is just that, our reflection and it would obscure the reflection of the mountain... do you see the point here?

This is really important for us to understand. I am who I am, but God is who He is! Only God power can transform my image into His. I cannot achieve this by doing good things of my own making. I can only teach or do the truth to the best of my ability in order that others can see Jesus in me. The order of things here, is that we want people to see Jesus not us ... anything else is pride in our selves.

I must decrease so that Jesus can increase, was the cry of John the Baptist as he heralded the beginning of Jesus' ministry on earth.

Less of self, more of Jesus, should be our desire today. I'll finish with Johns words:

John 3:27 (NLT)

John replied, "No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. You yourselves know how plainly I told you, 'I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.' It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the bridegroom's friend is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.



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