

## Sermon 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2020 Christ Church Coldharbour Romans 12: 1-8, Matthew 16: 13-20

Then Jesus asked them, 'But who do **you** say I am?' If Jesus was here now and asked us this question – what would we say? Do we know *about* Jesus or do we know him *personally* – do we know who he **really** is? Is He at the heart of all that we do?

Peter, the impetuous spokesman leaps in with his usual enthusiasm – but does he really believe what he is saying? What did he say when his world was falling apart, when Jesus was being sentenced to death? He had called him the Messiah, the Son of the Living God – why did that profession not give him courage in that friendless courtyard? And yet, once he understood **why** Jesus died, after Jesus confronted him on the beach and asked him to feed his sheep, and after the Holy Spirit empowered him, he found the courage of his conviction and he worked together with his friends to build the church that still survives and grows 2,000 years later.

The Bible – the story of Moses and the children of Israel and the culmination of God's promise to them: Jesus, their and our Saviour, is all about community. The church is a community of believers, coming together to name Jesus as Lord and Saviour, to praise our Creator God and to be empowered by his Spirit. But we can't do it on our own – we need each other, too.

Whenever I have started work with a new team, there's always been some kind of team analysis like the Myers Briggs Test, Enneagram or Strength Finders to work out who is good at what in the team – all personality types are needed to create a balanced team. It wouldn't work if we were all extroverts who had loads of ideas but didn't enjoy getting into the details of how those ideas would be put into action. We need the ideas people, those who ask the deeper questions, those who are willing to work through the minutiae of how a project will come to fruition. A team is as St Paul says, 'One body with many members, and not all the members have the same function.'

Peter, the natural leader, was the Rock, but he needed Jesus – and his friends – to build the church. He didn't have all the gifts needed: his brother Andrew was really good at bringing people to Jesus, Matthew, the tax collector, was probably good at maths, ...Thomas brought a healthy scepticism!

It would have been interesting to do a Myers Briggs test on the 12 Apostles. I'm sure there would have been many and varied gifts represented there.

To use a somewhat hackneyed phrase 'Teamwork makes the Dream Work' – it's how we are created to function at our best.

UBUNTU is a Zulu pronunciation of a Bantu word meaning – "the belief in a universal bond of sharing, that connects all humanity." Or more simply, 'I am because we are.'

Archbishop Desmond Tutu says this: "Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, 'Yu, u nobunto'; 'Hey so-and-so has ubuntu.' Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, 'My humanity is inextricably bound up in yours.' We belong in a bundle of life." (Desmond Tutu, No Future Without Forgiveness.)

He describes an ideal for life in community, making space for each other, encouraging each other and working together to create something better than could be achieved alone.

Archbishop Tutu used the principle of Ubuntu to bring peace and reconciliation to a country torn apart by racial hatred – a seemingly impossible task, but he together with his community achieved it. Now that principle is extended in Desmond Tutu's Peace Foundation with its aim of reaching 1 million young people teaching them the practices and skills of Peace3 –

Peace within oneself, Peace between people and Peace among nations.

Imagine the impact those million young people will have in the world!

Working in community with others with many gifts.

I love the phrase 'present yourself as a living sacrifice' – we say it in the prayer at the end of our Communion Service. God doesn't want a dead sacrifice but living - our lives lived well for Him. In community, in Ubuntu, using our gifts to serve Jesus, the son of the Living God, we will find strength working together with him at the heart of all that we do. Peter did build the church – but he didn't do it on his own, he did it with his friends, in community' with their faith in Jesus at the heart – their inspiration, their purpose and their strength – together.

Working in community with friends with many gifts.

Paul lists quite a few gifts in our reading from Romans: prophecy, ministry, exhortation, generosity, leadership, diligence, compassion, cheerfulness. I'm sure these and many more are represented here in this community.

To build a healthy team – and a healthy church we all need to support one another and bring our individual gifts to support the church – all are needed.

It starts with the strength of an affirmation like Peter's that Jesus is our Messiah, our Saviour, the Son of the Living God and continues with our coming together with His people, through His Holy Spirit, to continue to build the church that Peter and his friends began 2,000 years ago.

What might we achieve in this place if we put our talents together with Jesus at our heart?

Working in community with each other, with many gifts.

AMEN