

Why should we tell others?

In about four weeks' time our RETHINK week will be in full swing! At the heart of RETHINK is one of the core activities of the Christian church. The name of this activity is evangelisation.

Evangelisation is the work of sharing the good news about Jesus.

Or another way to say it is Evangelisation is introducing people to Jesus Christ.

Evangelisation is a priority for the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby he says

“Evangelism is joining in the work of God to bring redemption to this world. It's proclaiming the revolution of love that has rescued God's world from darkness to light.”

It is also at the core of our mission statement

We welcome like Jesus

And we Share like Jesus

I'm saying all this because most of us know what evangelisation is. we know what the gospel is and if you're not sure Christoph's sermon from last week on what the good news is will be online shortly

We know what the gospel is, we know evangelisation is about sharing the gospel. But perhaps we are wondering why? Why bother? Why should I tell my atheist friend, my Muslim friend, my agnostic friends, my Hindu friends and so on about Jesus Christ?

There of course lots of answers and there are swathes of books on the subject of evangelisation, but I want to suggest this morning is just two answers.

Knowledge and love

Let's begin with knowledge

We're going to start in John 14

Here are some of the most famous verses in the bible. Jesus is talking about the way to God and the way to heaven. Verse 3 Jesus says

If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.

So, this is about knowledge it's about knowing something. Jesus is going to prepare a place for you in heaven, you know the way to get there.

Now I think Thomas is quite wise because he asks

Lord we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?

Great question

And then Jesus responds with one of his most famous sayings

John 14:6

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

What is the way to heaven? Jesus.

What is the truth about God? Jesus.

What is the way to life and not death? Jesus.

And we could leave it there 3 answers to three questions.

But Jesus closes the circle because if we were to ask the question that flows from those answers.

Which might be. Is there any other way?

Jesus says "No one comes to the Father except through me"

There is no other way. There is no other name by which we must be saved.

This is what I am going to call the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

I sometimes call Christianity the most inclusive exclusive movement the world has ever seen.

Everyone is welcome, everyone can come. But there's only one way in and that's through Jesus Christ.

For who else has passed through the heavens? Who else has entered our weakness? Who else has been tempted in every way we are and yet is without sin? Who else offered himself as a single sacrifice for all time? Who else has sat down at the right hand of God and pleads on your behalf?

You will not find someone else. Jesus says I am the way, I am the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but through me.

There is no other way. So, let's hang that bauble on the tree Jesus is unique.

Ok What else do we need to know to understand the why of evangelisation...

Read with me in 2 Corinthians 5:10

[10] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (ESV)

The apostle Paul here is referring to the final judgement. The reality is we will all appear before the judgement seat of Christ.

It's a popular saying "only God can judge me". Which is then usually used as a way of justifying any behaviour. The problem is God will judge you and me. God isn't looking for but "But I was nice some of the time" "I told the truth most of the time". He's not looking at your character he's a good judge and like a good judge he's looking at your offences.

Paul is clear elsewhere all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And that the wages of sin are death. Death in that context meaning hell.

God is looking for righteous people. I had the privilege of listening to a Sikh couple from Southall the other day and they explained some of the core beliefs they have.

They believe that they will one day stand before their god. And he will judge them for their works good or bad.

In that moment I felt moved in my head I just said isn't Jesus wonderful.

He's wonderful

I was looking at this lovely couple. Whilst the god of Sikhism is what the Christian tradition would call a false god. There was some truth in what they said.

We will all stand before God and be judged. But not the god of Sikhism but God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And as I looked at this couple I thought if I had to stand before God and give an account for my actions. I would stand no chance. The Sikh couple in front of me were nicer than me, kinder than me, probably more charitable than me. But none of us would stand a chance before a holy God. Our offences are too great. How could God be just and let us off on a whim.

On the day of judgement God will look for the righteous. And if every human being turned up wishing to be judged on their own efforts God would only find one righteous person.

Jesus is the righteousness of God.

Skip ahead to the end of the chapter verse 21

2 Corinthians 5:21

[21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (ESV)

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If you want to stand before God. You need to have your offences taken away. In Jesus our offences are paid for on the cross. That is the only way, this comes back to the uniqueness of Jesus. We stand there righteous because we wear his righteousness.

So, what does that have to do with evangelisation.

Verse 11

[11] Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.

Knowing about the day of judgement, knowing about where we will stand, knowing that the only way to be safe on that great and terrible day is to be in Jesus Christ. We persuade others.

If we know what we just explored if we know that the only way on that last day is through Jesus.

So that's knowledge... we know Jesus is unique. We know the fear of the Lord therefore we persuade others...

Let's talk about love

First of all, we must be controlled by love

Secondly under that love we engage in the ministry of reconciliation

Verse 14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;

Because Christ died for us that we can live. We are controlled by love. By the way it probably would have been more comfortable to talk about the love of God before the fear of God, but I hope you can see I am following this passage through what we call exegetically which means verse by verse. So, I'm taking my structure from the text and not from how I feel this morning...

Be controlled by love. Are you controlled by the love of Christ? This is a great word in the Greek you'll notice I've given you the ESV translation in the newsheet this morning and it is for this one word. In Greek the word means to put pressure on something so that it moves into motion. So, some bibles translate it as compel which is a good translation. The love of Christ compels us. Or in this case as control and I like control because it is a strong image.

What would it look like to come under the control of the love of God? The love of God which is like light shining in a darkness. Have you prayed to be under the control of the love of God this morning?

And if you're not controlled by the love of God what are you controlled by. I had the privilege to meet an imam the other day and this particular gentleman had been the imam at the Finsbury park mosque. You will know it as the mosque that on the 19th June 2017 was attacked by a terrorist in a van. I would say that, that man was controlled by hate. He hated those people. Hate had a control over him.

Well you might say I'm not controlled by hate. But the question is what are you controlled by? Let's pretend there's another mosque and some of the members of that mosque are your friends... I hope this is true for a lot of you. We live in a multi-cultural society and it is good to not just mix with people like us. Now you probably aren't controlled by hate in this situation, but you might be controlled by fear of being perceived wrong. Many Christian people fear sharing their faith with their friends of other faiths because they worry about offending them.

What would it look like to be controlled by love? If you have ever been around someone who has just started a new relationship with someone they really love. They talk about them... a lot. A person has come into their life and they have all these amazing qualities that they can't stop telling other people about with Christ.

If you're fans of the TV series Rev. there's an amazing scene where Fr. Adam Smallbone is sent on a clergy management training day and they come to a section about evangelisation. The priest leading the course says when you like a nice restaurant or a theatre you tell people about it. So, to should be the same with Christ.

Silly though that is... A person who is controlled by the love of Christ would delight in telling other people about him. First of all because Jesus is wonderful. But also, you can look with empathy on your friend who's not yet a Christian and surely the most loving thing to do is to say I love you so much I want you to be in my family I want you as a brother, as a sister. I don't want you to go to hell. I can't save you myself but let me introduce you to someone who can... this is Jesus Christ.

Lastly verse 18 All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

This is about love again. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation.

Through Christ we are reconciled to God. And we have the job of spreading that love that reconciliation throughout the world.

The word reconciliation is a good one

Latin here

Re- again

Con- With

sella- to sit

We have a reminder of that as Christians in that we have a meal called Holy Communion where we sit at God's table again. We are welcomed into fellowship with God. Reconciled to him and also reconciled to each other. It is to this meal of love that we invite others.

Paul says to us... not to the apostles but to all Christians. We do evangelism because reconciliation is what the church is about.

So in the words of matt papa

Jesus is alive. Hell is real. The harvest is vast. The workers are few. The mission is clear. The call is go. The reward is Christ. Risk it all.