

Introduction

In our first sermon looking at Knowing God, John talked about what worship is about. Just to recap for a moment, he said that worship is a Christian's first and primary responsibility to God, that it involves surrender and submission, and he looked at a few of the things that stop us worshipping. If you want to re-read his sermon or any of the other sermons in this series, they are on the website. The address is at the bottom of the notice sheet and the sermons are in the Resources section.

This morning, I would like to consider a couple of things that came to me while I was reading the passages. The first is who it is we are worshipping and the second is what we can expect.

Who do we Worship

The first thing that struck me when reading through the passages for today was how both Peter and Paul addressed Jesus. They both addressed him as "Lord". That made me think about what does that word mean to us?

Lord as God

For me, my first understanding is of the LORD as being a reference to God. We often start our services with the "The Lord be with you" and throughout our services we use the word Lord to refer to God. There is nothing wrong with this meaning of Lord, but I'm not sure that it was actually what either Peter or Paul meant when they used the word. Peter was talking to the person he had spent the last 3 years living with. While I am sure that he had some initial understanding of Jesus as God, I don't think it was influencing who he thought he was talking to.

Lord as Honorary Title

The next definition I thought of was that of an honorary Lord, such as a member of the peerage. These are people that have the title of Lord but it doesn't really make any difference in their daily life. An example might be Councillor Abid Hussain, Lord Mayor of Bradford. It's a title of respect.

Where I work, we are swapping to some new software and have a consultant over from India who has now been with us for about 2 years and I've got to know him quite well. Even after all this time, his natural greeting is "Good morning sir". It has nothing to do with any entitlement on my side, it is just his way of showing respect.

Lord as Master

The final definition of a Lord is equivalent to master. A lord of a household or village is someone with control over that area. In the UK there is no-one that legally has this sort of power now, but in the past Lords had pretty much absolute authority over their estate. What they wanted happened.

I can't say for sure which meaning was meant in our readings since, in the same way as in English, the same Greek word, κύριος (*Koo'-ree-os*) is used for these different meanings. My suspicion though is that they were using the word as a title of respect. They were to discover though, over the next few years, that in fact Jesus was Lord in all 3 ways. This learning was new to them, but is something we have had 2000 years to understand.

What can we expect

We have come together to worship this Lord, Jesus, so what can we expect this to involve?

Pleases God

The first point is actually described just before our gospel reading started and hinted at in the first words we read, "After they had eaten". Jesus came and met his friends for breakfast, relaxing and enjoying their presence in the every day activity. Did he have to meet them there in a place and at a time that they weren't expecting him? Did he have to provide food for them to eat? Of course he didn't have to but he wanted to.

Jesus loved meeting with his friends and he hasn't changed. When we take time to meet with him, either in a group as we do on a Sunday or individually, it makes him happy. Just think about that for a moment, when we worship Jesus we are making him happy, we are pleasing him.

And that's not only when we are worshipping him together here in church. As I said, we can worship communally or alone. Taking a few minutes to focus on him before heading into a busy day or before going to bed. Spending a period of time reading the bible and opening yourself in prayer. These are all actions that bring us together with Jesus and they bring him the pleasure of meeting with his friends.

Master's Instructions

However, the meal was only the first part of the morning that Jesus shared with his friends. The second part was his discussion with Peter, and this is the second place where the 2 readings we have had today link. In both readings Jesus gave his followers instructions. With Peter it was to take care of his sheep, to be a leader of the new church, the extended group of friends, that was about to be born. Paul was given less explicit instructions, just being told to go into the city where he would receive further instructions.

This is Jesus the Lord, with the Master understanding of Lord, giving instructions to those under his rule, to those in his family. Jesus loves meeting with his friends, but he is still the master and so he has the right to give instructions and expect them to be obeyed.

Sometimes, his instructions will be *full* instructions and will give us all the information that we need about the task, as they were with Peter. Sometimes though the instructions will be more like the instructions to Paul, to make a start with further instructions being given later.

Our response

As we worship Jesus, if we are willing to listen, he will still give us instructions. If we recognise Jesus as Lord then it is up to us to obey those instructions. For John, Bryony, Anne, Sharon and myself, those instructions have led to us standing at the front of church doing our best to help everyone in this congregation grow to know Jesus better, but those were *our* instructions. Jesus knows each of us and he will give each one of us different instructions based on who we are.

When we say yes to what we have been instructed, Jesus then helps us to fulfil that calling. I know for certain that without that help, I would not have managed to finish my final year of reader training. Work was extremely tough and the essays had got more demanding and I was really struggling, but with God's help, mainly shown through the love and encouragement of Sarah and Caleb, I made it. I know that Sharon has also been struggling a bit. She started on the journey she had been instructed, but has been finding it tough to push on to the next stage. I've been trying to do a bit of encouraging (read as nagging) to press on.

The last thing I would like to say here is a phrase from a song I heard many years ago, but I can't remember anything except this one line. "He does not compel you to go against your will, he just makes you willing to go". Jesus sees us as friends and he will not ask us to do what we are vehemently opposed to. He may however change our view points first and then....who knows.

Conclusion

So, to summarise,

- Jesus is Lord, a term for God a term of respect and a term indicating the master.
- He enjoys spending time with his friends when we worship him.
- He will give us instructions to be followed but he will also give us the strength we need to follow.