

St Annes Ryde
ANGELICAN CHURCH



CGS 22 Term 3
2010

Theology 101 (ctd)

Matthew: First among equals (ctd)



**Bible based, application focussed
discussion material**

prepared by Greg Burke and linked to sermons
preached at St Anne's Ryde Anglican Church

Discussion 1 Resurrection: Vindication and Victory

Sermon 25/7/10 Acts 2:20-36, 1Corinthians 15:50-58

1. If an archeologist discovered Jesus' bones (and could prove it!!!) in a tomb near Jerusalem, what difference would this make to your faith?
2. Why do you think Paul says "*And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.*" (1 Corinthians 15:17-19) ?
3. How would you respond to a liberal Bishop who states that Jesus' resurrection is not a bodily resurrection, it is a metaphor that means the spirit (NOTE small "s") of Jesus lives in the believer and the church?
4. Paul prays that the Christians in Ephesus would know the power of God that raised Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:18-21). How would you expect to see this prayer answered? How do we know and experience the resurrection power of God? Read Ephesians 2:1-10. How does this help to answer the question?
5. How does the Christian understanding of resurrection differ from a general belief in "life after death"? In what ways can this general belief be misleading and give false assurance?

Discussion 2 The Spirit of Jesus

Sermon 1/8/10 John 14:15-31 and 16:5-16

1. Do you think it is possible to preach a "Spirit filled" sermon and not mention the Holy Spirit? Why / Why not?
2. Jesus says that the Spirit is at work in the world (John 16:8-11). Have you seen any evidence of this "convicting work" in your own life? In the lives of your not-yet-Christian friends and family members?
3. Read John 14:15-31 and 16:5-16 and list the connections between Jesus and his Spirit.
4. Read Romans 8:1-17 and list the features of the two options for living "according to the sinful nature" and "according to the Spirit"
5. What do you think are the differences between "Fruit of the Spirit" and "Gifts of the Spirit" (See 1Corinthians 12:4-11 and Galatians 6:16-26). To what extent are each of these categories optional for the Christian believer?

Discussion 3 Jesus changes lives

Stories 8/8/10

Read Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42 and discuss the following questions:

1. What two (or more) social "taboos" does Jesus break when he speaks to this woman?
2. What motivates him in his interactions with her?
3. How does Jesus arouse her interest in his identity and message?
4. Why does he use the "water" metaphor?
5. What evidence is there that Jesus will not compromise the issue of sin as he offers the gospel of life?
6. What are the two reasons the Samaritans of the town give for trusting Jesus and believing his claim to be Messiah? To what extent does their experience mirror the experience of people we talk to about Jesus?

Paul says "If anyone is in Christ he/she is a NEW CREATION". (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15)

What do you think he means by that?

What evidence have you seen of God's creative work in your own life?

What do you think God actually expects of you in terms of changes?

What "right" have our friends and family who are not yet believers got to demand evidence of change in us if we say we follow Jesus?

Discussion 4 The gospel of grace

Sermon 15/8/10 2Corinthians 8:9 and Ephesians 2:1-10

1. Someone has said "Grace is such a foreign concept to western ears that it requires a culture change before someone really understands the gospel." Do you agree? Why/why not?
2. How would you define "grace" in simple terms to someone to whom you were explaining the news of Jesus? Can you think of a story or life experience to illustrate grace?
3. How would you respond to a friend who says "It doesn't matter about sin because God is in the business of forgiveness." What passages from the Bible would you refer him to?

4. What are the dangers in an approach to Christian living that says “Believe as if salvation all about grace and act as if it is all about works”
5. What is the place of good works in Christian living? See Ephesians 2:8-10, 1Peter 2:12, Matthew 5:16. How do they relate to faith? See James 2:14-26.

Discussion 5 Sovereignty: God rules

Sermon 22/8/10 Romans 8:28-39

1. How would you respond to a friend who says - “How can you say there is a loving God in control of the world when there is so much suffering in the world?” How would your response be different if you knew that your friend’s child had just been diagnosed with a life threatening illness?
2. Romans 8 explores the issue of suffering. Read verses 15-39. What does this passage teach us about suffering and our response to it - specifically
 - i. the inevitability of suffering,
 - ii. its duration and final outcome,
 - iii. our grounds for hope and
 - iv. the comfort and confidence God gives us as we endure suffering
3. How does the crucifixion of Jesus illustrate that God’s sovereignty extends even over human sinfulness?
4. List the reasons you have for trusting God with your future.

Discussion 6 Church: The people of God

Sermon 29/8/10 Ephesians 2:11-22

1. What could people in our community mean when they say “St. Anne’s is my church”. How would you respond to someone who attends a funeral here and says “I haven’t been to church for years but I don’t think they should have got rid of the painted scroll”.
2. The New Testament writers commonly use “Church” to mean the local meeting of Christians or sometimes the gathering of God’s people in heaven.. What do the following titles imply about the nature and purpose of our meetings at St. Anne’s:
“The body of Christ”, “The bride of Christ”, “The church of the firstborn”

3. In Ephesians 2:11-18 Paul speaks about Jesus' death and resurrection uniting Jews and Gentiles. What evidence can you see at St. Anne's of this profound unity (not necessarily between Jews and Gentiles but across other differences that would divide us)?
4. Church as a building is an image Paul uses in Ephesians 2:19-22. What does Paul use this image to teach about church in these verses?
5. Someone has said "When two or more people meet together there will be compromise." To what extent do you think compromise is needed when we meet together on Sundays? What principles would you use to distinguish those issues that are fundamental and cannot be compromised from those that are "up for grabs". Give examples
6. What do you think is/are the essential task/s or role/s of church?

Discussion 7 New Creation

Sermon 5/9/10 2Peter 3:1-13, Revelation 21:1-8

1. The "plot" of the Bible has been summarised as "From Creation to New Creation". How helpful do you think this is? What evidence is there in Revelation 21:1-8 and Revelation 22:1-6 that this plot centres on Jesus and in particular, his death?
2. In the light of Peter's teaching about the return of Jesus in 2Peter 3, how would you respond to:
 - i. A not yet Christian friend who says you are silly to look forward to a new world - that makes you of no use in this world."
 - ii. A Christian friend who says "I don't care about climate change. The world is coming to an end anyway. What's the point in caring for it?"
3. What sort of life should Christians live according to Peter in 2Peter 3:11-18? Why do you think he says this? What is the link between the day of the Lord and our lifestyle as we wait?
4. Peter picks up Jesus' use of the "Thief in the night" to describe his return (2Peter 3:10). Read the original parable in Matthew 24:36-51. How does Jesus contrast the attitudes of his disciples with the attitudes of others in this passage?

Discussion 8 Gospel opposition

Sermon 12/9/10 Matthew 10:16-25

1. Some Christians take Matthew 10:19 as a promise that means they do not have to do any preparation or training before they speak to people about Jesus. How would you argue against this use of the verse?
2. Read Acts 4:1-22 and Acts 5:12-42 to see Jesus' warnings of future persecution fulfilled. How would you describe the character of Peter and John? How do they respond when they are commanded not to talk about Jesus?
3. Read the prayer of the disciples in Acts 4:23-31. What understanding of the character of God does this prayer reveal? What do they ask for in this prayer?
4. Christian believers are being persecuted today because of their faith. Discuss what you and your group and our church could do to support them.
5. Do you think Christians should support Amnesty International which supports people of all (or no) religious faith/s who are being persecuted? Why/why not?

Discussion 9 Gospel division

Sermon 19/9/10 Matthew 10:26-42

1. Jesus warns his disciples to be afraid of "the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell". Who do you think he is referring to? How would you reply to someone who says that warnings of Judgement and hell are inconsistent with a God of love?
2. What comfort does Jesus give in verses 29-31? What reason does he give for confidence in difficult situations?
3. Jesus speaks about the division that will flow from his ministry in verses 34 - 42. Many people would be surprised to hear these words on Jesus' lips. Why do you think that would be? Do you think Jesus deliberately aims at producing division? Why/why not?
4. Some Christians are so insensitive and thoughtless that they seem to invite opposition and deliberately cause division. How would you advise someone like this?

5. Do you know of any examples where Christian faith has caused division within a family or marriage? How should a Christian person respond if they are forced to choose between a family member or marriage partner and Jesus? How do verses 37-39 apply here?

Discussion 10 The last prophet
Sermon 26/9/10 Matthew 11:1-19

1. What state of mind could John have been in as he sent his disciples to ask Jesus the question in verses 2&3? Would Jesus' reply (verses 4-6) have reassured him?
2. Jesus speaks about John in verses 7-15. In what way is John "more than a prophet"? Why do you think Jesus says that the person who is least in the kingdom is greater than John the Baptist?
3. Both John and Jesus were criticised by their opponents for "not dancing to their tune". What do verses 16-19 teach about the perversity of human nature when confronted with someone who is different? In what way do you think Jesus and John were proved "right by their actions" (v19).
4. Can you think of examples of Christians being criticised because they do not follow the crowd? What do you think would be the best response to this criticism?