

“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.” 2 Cor. 5: 16

Dear Friends,

Back at the start of the month I used my pastoral letter to write about the “Domination System”. It is a phrase that sums up many of this world’s attitudes to people who are different to us. In our theme preaching this week, the passage set for us to reflect upon is from 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and the theme is about being “*clothed in immortality*.” One way of understanding what Paul writes in that chapter is that we should look at how we live in this life through the lens of eternal life lived in the Kingdom of God. Though we live in the United Kingdom, we are citizens of another Kingdom and God calls us to live life God’s way in both Kingdoms that we inhabit. (A reflection on 2 Corinthians 5: 1 – 10 can be found on the Circuit website: www.wandamethodists.org.uk)

The quotation above comes just a few short verses later. It concerns the need for us to live life now from the perspective of the attitudes of God’s Kingdom. There has been an awful lot of coverage in the media in recent weeks that relates, in one way or another, to the question, “*How should we treat one another?*” It is a question which requires of us that we search our hearts, our souls, our minds in order to examine just how much of a difference the love and grace of God have made in transforming us into the image of him who gave his life in love for the whole world. If we are brave enough to do that and honest enough to reflect upon what we find deep inside us, we may find that we do not much like the image that is reflected back to us.

Though we are constantly being formed more into the image of Christ, still we live in and are influenced by the broken world and domination system which are trying to pull us away from God’s good influence. The good news is that God’s love and grace are the two strongest forces in the cosmos. If we are open to them, they will win the day in our own lives and in this world. But it is a daily battle and we need to recognise that often we get it wrong, we allow ourselves to be moulded by too much of what we see, hear and read, rather than, as Paul counsels us in Philippians 4: “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.”

The central commandments that Jesus gives to those who follow him are expressed in these four ways:

- Love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind
- Love your neighbour as yourself
- Love one another as I have loved you
- Do to others as you would have them do to you

These are the attitudes of the Kingdom of God. How do they compare to the attitudes that you find deep down in your own life? What are your gut reactions when you hear the words, “*Black lives matter*,” or when you read about the Department for International

Development being merged with the more political/diplomatic Department for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs? How do you react when you hear that this week is classified as “Refugee Week”? Should your faith have anything to do with your political concern? And when I say that I do not mean party politics. What I mean is does our theological understanding of God and this world have anything to say to our political, economic, sociological and philosophical theories or should it be kept separate?

I do not believe the four attitudes of life in God’s kingdom, allow the disciple of Jesus to keep them separate. As such, I urge you, in whatever way you are able, to get involved in campaigns that work to make this world a better place for all of its citizens, not just the powerful, wealthy, white, western, straight, male ones.

I want to finish this letter by borrowing some material from the Refugee Week website:

“The poet Lemn Sissay once described his wonderment at the thought that everything around us was imagined first. Everything physical – the camera he was looking at, the microphone he was talking into – started as an act of imagination. He wrote a poem:

*I will not limit myself
I will not be afraid
If it were not imagined
How else could it be made?*

This simple act is an invitation to take a step back from the current moment and imagine the world you want to see. What would your school, community, city, or the planet look like, if you made the rules?

You can take this simple act wherever your imagination wants to go and start as small or as big as you like. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Draw, paint, craft or write a poem or story about the world you want to see
- Write a poem or short story starting with ‘Imagine if...’ or ‘Imagine a world where...’
- Imagine you had to leave your home behind. What would you take with you? What would you hope to find?

Stick your imagining in your window, send it to a friend, or share it on social media using the hashtag #SimpleActs #Imagine.

I wonder, how are you and your church working to make the world a better, safer place for refugees?

With every blessing

Rev Tim Perkins