

Keeping Jesus to Ourselves?

Intro. Groups looking at the ideal dinner party guests.

For me

Dad

Ray Mears

Jesus

Bryan Ferry

An ancient-Pyramids-Stonehenge

Neil Armstrong

Queen Elizabeth 11

Martin O'neill (since writing have added CR)

Queen Elizabeth 1

If it was one guest, who would it be?

For Peter, James and John the mountain top must have been like the perfect dinner guest list-Jesus, Elijah and Moses. The modern and the ancient. Imagine the questions they would have had for Moses-what was it like going up against Pharaoh and the Egyptian empire-did the plagues really happen. What about the Exodus, the Red Sea, getting the Ten Commandments-40 years in the desert-how gutted were you that you never got to the Promised Land.

Peter, was particularly excited as he offered to build shelters for the three of them. Why? To keep them comfortable, to keep them there so that they could have a good chat or I wonder because as they were there he wanted them to stay so that he could, if you will, keep them to himself. As soon as they left that mountain then they went back into the public domain but if they stayed there then Peter could have them all to himself.

To make it even more exciting God then puts in an appearance. "This is my Son who I love and with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him. After which just Jesus was left. Then He tells them to tell no one what they've seen and heard until he is raised from the dead. We had a family lunch last Sunday with our granddaughter Mia. She had Ice Cream with her pud. I said mmmm that's Grandads favourite. " No! its my favourite" she replied-indignantly. To her young mind if it's her favourite then it can't possibly be anyone else's.

Jesus is our friend-our favourite friend-but the trouble is he's everyones friend. I do worry that as practicing, worshipping Christians that all we want to do is to build a shelter for Jesus so that we can keep him with us. Jealously guarding what we have-because he's our friend, he can't possibly be yours.

Going back to the mountain top I wonder what those disciples would have asked Elijah?

How did you feel when you defeated the priests of Baal and Queen Jezebel?
Did you get a buzz when you helped the widow and brought her child back from the dead?

Why did you run away?

God asked him the same question

His answer to God was that no one was listening to him so he hid in a cave. God was having none of that and effectively called him in for a dressing down. Appear to me on the mountain. Do you remember what happened next? The big wind, earthquake, fire and then the still small voice. Elijah, stop hiding away and go and do what you're supposed to do. Give them my message.

Do you feel that no one wants to listen to what God has to say anymore? There's plenty of evidence in the world to suggest that.

What do we do then? At the moment you could say that we are like Elijah we run and hide. Where is the best place you know to go to get away from the world? Where no one will see us? Where we don't have to worry what the world says or thinks about us? Where you can almost guarantee there will be few people there.

Dare I say, it's in here in church. And not just in this church but in churches across the country

But, I hear you say this is God's house and we come to worship him here. Yes of course we do and we must continue to do so. But this is a house that has a locked gate on it during the week and a big heavy wooden door shut to keep us safe and to stop folk seeing in. Its like we've built a shelter to keep Jesus in-and the world out.

The Salvation Army calls many of its churches Citadels. My home church was Eastbourne Citadel. I could never quite understand it. In a castle the Citadel is the place of retreat-a place of safety. We retreat into our Citadels-to be safe from a world that doesn't want to listen anymore. But it's a world that needs to hear!

(insert-Church **WITHOUT WALLS** is making new Christians.....)

I am as guilty, if not more guilty than anyone else in this. I enjoy coming to church on my own on a Sunday because its my time. My time-No its not its God's time and God through Jesus makes it very clear that we have a commission to tell the world of the transforming effect of knowing Him.

What bigger nudge do we need than;

“This is my Son who I love and with who I am well pleased. Listen to Him!

When my daughter Emma got her 1st class honours degree-with star- I wanted to tell everyone-this is Emma, who I love and I’m well pleased with her.

But, do I ever say, this is Jesus who I love and who loves me-I want to tell you all about him and what he’s done for me. For me, in truth-its been a while.

As they are coming off the mountain Straight away Jesus says to the disciples “wait until I rise from the dead before you tell anyone about this” This is not never, just when the biggest impact can be achieved. Well he has risen from the dead, he has beaten sin and the world needs to know this. And who will tell the world if not us?

During his short time on earth Jesus sent his followers out to tell folk about about him. The 72 he sent that came back thrilled that people had heard and wanted more of Jesus. The fishermen-“follow me and I will make you fishers of men”. Not follow me and you can have me all to yourself but by following me it is almost a requirement that you bring others to me.

I ask all of us-especially me. When did we last tell someone about what Jesus has done in our lives, or invited someone to church? Perhaps you have and we thank and praise God for that

We cannot hope to grow as a Church if our natural instinct is to build a shelter around Jesus to keep him to ourselves.

When Peter recalls this in the passage that Jocelyn read to us, he says “we didn’t follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but were eyewitnesses to his majesty”.

Now, we may never have a mountain top experience like Peter did, or a Road to Damascus experience like Paul but we have all witnessed the majesty of Christ and the transformation he makes. The joy he brings, the comfort he brings, the healing he brings the change he makes in the lives of those who have given their heart and lives to him. These are no cleverly devised stories this is real, we should be well pleased that we have him in our lives- and we need to share that and him.

We have looked at the vision for the partnership over the past few weeks. Can I ask you “what is your vision of your relationship with God?” Is it something to be jealously guarded, to be kept to yourself?

Or is the vision one of a saviour who saved you which makes you well pleased and as such you need to tell everyone. What is your dream for our church?

“Yesterday my dream died”. For a dream to die, first there must be a dream.

Is your dream one that has this church full every week, where souls are being saved where Christ is at the centre of everything? If it is then we have to take Jesus out of that shelter. We must look out from our place of safety to a world that needs to hear and to listen.

And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the whole world.

If not us then who?