**Who Is Jesus? Revd Dr Calvin Samuel**

Who is Jesus? Having spent a little bit of time talking about who Jesus was, it’s really important to think about who Jesus is. In other words, what is the continuing relevance of Jesus for us today? Because Jesus is not simply a historical character, as important as that is. It is really important that Jesus is the Jesus of history; that the stories of the gospels intersect with our lives. But if Jesus remains only an historical figure, he is of only limited significance for us. The gospels all end with the story of Jesus’ resurrection. In other words, that Jesus who is described in those stories, is still alive and still with us today. Indeed, if you follow that story through to Acts or indeed the end of Luke, we hear about Jesus ascending so that this Jesus is present to us by his Spirit.

So, who is Jesus. Four things. First, Jesus is for us someone who has walked where we walk. And the writer of Hebrews makes a very big deal of this. What this means is that whatever we experience, Jesus has experienced, and therefore whatever has been possible for him is theoretically possible for us by God’s Spirit. So that’s first.

The second, because Jesus is risen and he is therefore everywhere now by His Spirit, that risen Lord is able to be with us in our most dark moments as well as in our moments of joy.

I think the third thing is the idea of Jesus as our teacher. One of the wonderful things about the gospels is that the disciples are really, really bad at the job of being the disciples. They constantly fail to understand, fail to believe, fail to live up to all of the things that Jesus expects of them. And that’s really good news for us, because we do pretty much the same thing. We too fail to understand and fail to believe and fail to live up to all of the things that Jesus expects of us. And so this disciple-teacher relationship that Jesus models in the gospel – clearly it’s not quite the same, but there are elements of that which are very much present for us. And so we can come to this Jesus and say the kind of prayers that we find in the gospels. Here’s an example: wonderful story of Jesus meeting a father whose son is ill and Jesus asks him, “do you believe I can heal your son?” and he says “Lord, I believe.” And then he says, “help my unbelief.” I love that. He recognises both his capacity to believe and his limitations. And that’s the nature of Christian discipleship – we are dealing with a Saviour, a Lord who is able to take us from where we are but also recognise our limitations.

But I think finally, the idea of Jesus as Saviour. The gospels spend most of their time journeying towards the cross. For example Mark’s gospel. The first half of it tells us all sorts of stories about Jesus healing and all sorts of things. But the whole second half runs towards the cross. A very similar thing happens in Luke’s gospel, where a vast chunk of the gospel is really the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, where the cross awaits.

Why do the gospel writers make such a big deal about the cross? Because they understand that event to be not simply a historical event, but also a theological one. They believe something really significant is happening in that moment. It’s one of the reasons that Mark’s gospel for example tells us about all sorts of interesting things that happen at the point of crucifixion. There is an eclipse for three hours. That veil in the Temple is torn from top to bottom. For them this was theologically significant, that the way to God was now open because something dramatic had changed in the reality, the very fabric of reality in the world, because the Saviour had come and had purchased our redemption.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is the one who is our teacher, those of us who are disciples. Jesus is the one who has been raised. But Jesus is the one who is our Saviour, because of that engagement – that very real, that very historical engagement in our world, in our space, in our time, in our particularity. We can engage with that Saviour today.