

Worship Material
Seeing the invisible God
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 20th July

Begin with an opening prayer

Lord, as we gather here today,
open our eyes,
so we can truly see you.

Open our ears,
so we can truly hear you.

Calm our busy hands,
so we don't miss a thing.

Amen.

Read Colossians 1.15-28

Bible notes

As with Abraham's visitors, so with Jesus – it is easy to miss the coming of God when he arrives in such an unexpected form. In one of Paul's richest theological reflections on the coming of Jesus, he talks about the crucified Christ as the invisible God made visible. Paul tells his first hearers that true authority and power are not found in the pomp and might of Caesar, but in the humility and suffering of Jesus. His point is even clearer if you read these verses backwards:

In verses 20a-19 (see also 2:13-15), Paul shows that reconciliation comes through self-giving, laying aside your interests to serve the needs of others. We see a pale reflection of this in people such as Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela; but we see it most gloriously in Jesus. Then verses 17-16 point to God making all things new. All through human history our suffering king has been holding creation together even as we try to tear it apart; his suffering is not limited to the cross! And now Jesus remakes this ruined world, creates harmony, peace, new life and reconciles cultures; he invites us to be part of it, paying our price of entry through the cross. So verse 15 tells us that if we want to see God, then we need to look not at Caesar in his pomp, but at Jesus on his cross. It is as we look at the crucified one that we see the world-making, world-reconciling God in all his glory.

Paul paints this picture to show us how we'll live. We are all invited to enter God's kingdom (vv.21-23), through the offered body of Jesus (v.22). But this will not be an easy ride (v.24): If we follow Jesus, we'll suffer as he did. This is a graphic picture of what we might call the 'convulsions of redemption' (see also Romans 8:18-28), i.e. the pains and the problems by which the Church grows into the signpost to God's kingdom. As we embody the values of Jesus, we will encounter opposition but, if we respond with a servant heart, others may see the image of the true God (vv.25-26). And so Paul points to our hope (vv.28-29), which keeps us going because one day we will be perfect in a perfect world (v.28) – that is the glory we hope for.

Prayer

We praise you, God of encounter and promise,
for those kingdom moments in our lives that
have been turning points; those encounters that
have given us fresh eyes, new insights, warmed hearts;
those people whose eyes have been so fixed on you that
they have inspired us in our faith and in our daily lives.
We praise and thank you for all the ways you meet us
in one another, and most of all we praise you for your Son,
Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Lord, life is busy.
Help us this week to take some time
to sit at your feet
and truly see and hear from you.
Be in our decision-making and in our thoughts.

Amen.