

## **Solus Christus URC 22 May 2022**

I understand that you have been studying the five Solas which are used to highlight Protestant teaching and to differentiate it from Catholic teaching.

The task you have given me to speak on, that in Christ Alone we have a mediator between God and man and his priests are communicators of his light and salvation.

I believe God loves unity in his church even though we worship and pray differently but the enemy would love us to be as divided as possible, but I won't go there. Religion was associated with power and politics but we need to focus on Jesus. The Catholic faith reveres, or honours Mary (depending on whether it is high or low church) and intercedes through her because she was chosen by God to bear his son and accepted this risky, challenging and ultimately excruciatingly painful task without question. Similarly saints have been created by the Catholic faith to honour those who have been demonstrably faithful often martyred. Does that acknowledgement take away their understanding of Jesus in the way we all understand it, not with the Catholics that I am meeting.

Mary gives a wonderful example of submission and obedience, having heard that she will conceive the son of God out of wedlock (by the Holy Spirit), which would make her liable to be stoned to death by her community, she says in Luke 1:38 'I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true'. Do I pray to Mary, no?

Our penultimate hymn will be in Christ Alone which is a wonderful summary of what I will say today.

### **God is all powerful**

In that wonderful passage from Isaiah read at the beginning, we are reminded that God is almighty and all powerful and that we can't and shouldn't contain him in a box limited by our own experiences and our language.

That point is not new to you, but is worth emphasising again; we believe in Jesus who is the son of God, who performed supernatural miracles and ultimately gave his life and rose again from the dead and then sent the Holy Spirit to be our Counsellor and guide, as we will celebrate on the 5<sup>th</sup> June this year at the all church Pentecost service (quick plug).

Your church is piloting the Dunamis ministry named after the Greek word for the Holy Spirit and from which we get the name dynamite to mean something akin to an earthquake, massively powerful, and **we miss the potential of our ministry if we do not recognise, call on and step into all that God wants us to do through the Holy Spirit.**

God is love, Jesus demonstrates this, but we see in the scriptures that Jesus would pray to his Father and then come out equipped to minister, for after his baptism we read in Luke 4:14, 'Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power'.

If we look at all the problems of the world and get disheartened then we are looking at the world through the wrong lens, we need to live with an eternity mindset, with our eyes fixed not on the things of this world but on the heavenly possibilities of life with Jesus.

In John 4 1-26, the passage that Sue read, we heard about an encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. I want to draw out from this about the relationship between Jesus and his Father and about God's relationship with us.

## **The Trinity**

Before I do I want to touch on the Trinity, a subject that I have rarely heard spoken about in church, but actually essential to our understanding of our Faith and to the title Solus Christus. I think it isn't preached much because it can be tricky to explain. Certainly Moslems think we worship three Gods and to many people the idea that God is three in one is just plain confusing, especially if Jesus is divine and yet prays to God the Father.

Some explain the Trinity this way; I am a father, husband, grandfather, school mentor and whilst I have many roles I am still one person. Others speak of water, Ice and steam to show how one substance can have different forms. The film the shack tries to visually portray this by showing God as a mature woman, Jesus as a young man and the Holy Spirit as a young woman ( spoiler alert).

We know that the Trinity represents the perfect fulfilment of relationship, with all three parts of God being present at the beginning of creation as we see in Genesis 1v1 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth... and the Spirit of the Lord was hovering over them. John starts his gospel in John 1v1 'in the beginning was the word, the word was with God and the word was with God. He existed in the beginning with God....the Word gave life to everything that was created and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it'.

**So John shows us that Jesus is unique as God's special son, yet he is fully God.** Because he is fully God, Jesus is able to reveal God to us clearly and accurately. So Jesus is God made man to dwell amongst us. All through the gospels Jesus reminds us of who he is, such as in John 10 30 when Jesus says 'The Father and I are one'.

**Jesus leaves us in no doubt** as recalled in John 14 6 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No-one can come to the Father except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and you have seen him.' In v9 he says to Philip 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father..the words I speak are not my own but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. Just believe that I am the Father and the Father is in me.'

So the topic Christ set me, Solus Christus, through Christ alone is demonstrated by Christ's own words, and he is the vine and we are the branches but.... Because the Trinity is a perfect family, Jesus involves another part of himself... the Holy Spirit.

Jesus explains about the role of the Holy Spirit to the Disciples in John 16 v7 '..it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come'. Christ's presence on earth

was limited to one place at a time, but his leaving meant he could be present to the whole world through the Holy Spirit.

Now we as committed Christians have grown up with this teaching. **How did you find the exercise at the beginning where you tried to explain this to a stranger in the café who showed a passing interest in understanding what God is like, and what difference knowing him has had on your life?**

We need to explain the fundamentals of our faith in a clear and honest way and this is why Alpha is such a good introductory tool. **Can I ask you to put your hand up if you have studied an Alpha course in the last 5 years?**

Even if you have done a course in the past, probably with those sermons from Nicky Gumbell at the podium, you will be amazed how well the material has been updated in a modern and exciting way.

## **The woman at the well**

Sue read this passage for me which I chose because it shows everything about the heart of God, it illustrates Solus Christus in that Jesus is the way to God as he explains to the woman and it shows us how we should interact with everyone we meet as we aspire to be like Jesus.

Have you ever wondered why if Jesus had only three years to teach about the Father and to train a handful of disciples, he had time to spend with just one person?

Jesus is putting into practice the most pithy mission statement I have ever heard; his words are related in Mark and Matthew see Mark 12 v30 ‘..love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. The second [commandment] is equally important; love your neighbour as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these.’

**OK then this is really important!** It’s also brilliant because the whole bible is encapsulated in these few words and if we did this we would see heaven on earth!!

The Jews didn’t believe the Samaritans were their neighbours and therefore this commandment didn’t apply to being nice to them; remember that shocking story about the Despised Samaritan in Luke 11 v30 who helps the man who has been robbed and left for dead on the roadside when the Priest and the Temple Assistant walked by without stopping

So in this encounter Jesus shows all the qualities of God to the woman in this one-on-one encounter. **What do you think they are.....?**

He affirms and loves the woman... by speaking to her ( in Jewish custom a Jew should not talk to a Samaritan ( a race that came from intermarriage between Jews and foreigners), let alone a woman on her own. This shows God does not have issues with gender or race, after all he created us ALL in his own image.

He knows all about how we live our lives ( You are right that you have had five husbands..), he knows that this woman coming alone in the heat of the day to draw water is an outcast in her society because of her lifestyle ( elsewhere he tells us he has come for the sick not the well).

He doesn't judge or admonish her but offers her something better than the life that she has been living, he offers living water from a source, that will never run dry...HIM!

Jesus hints( Remez) that there will be a time when God is not worshipped in a Temple or a mountain..

The encounter so impacts the woman, she immediately gets that she has met the Messiah and **when we have such good news we want to share it don't we?** ( well in truth we may keep it to ourselves) but the woman rushes back to her community forgetting the physical needs she had of the water in the jar and boldly goes to the people who have rejected her and tells them the good news in v29 ' come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah? So the people came streaming from the village to see him and in v42 we hear' 'Now we believe, not just because of what you have told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world.'

## **The world is full of broken people who need Jesus**

So to come full circle; People need Jesus and they need to speak to God through him. You may have heard of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, food, shelter and warmth that he says every person has to have as a priority before everything else.

Well there are hidden needs that we all have, to be loved, to love and to have meaning and purpose.

Because we don't have these things and because God gave us freewill, the world is full of people who hurt others because they have not found the fulfilment of these things and that fulfilment is in knowing Jesus intimately. There is an expression that hurt people hurt people.

In Exodus and Numbers we read that the sins of the parents can be visited on the children;how often have you seen that? I remember when I was in the Police, they would show me how the 'family business' was passed down from father and uncle to the sons and so they were arresting the children of people they had locked up earlier in their careers.

And we see the pervasive way the enemy is working, yes I do believe it is the work of the devil, to corrupt our children, and the democratic systems of this country that have been founded on Christian principles... and across the world.

You may have heard of the term 'County lines' where our children in Kent and elsewhere are being used to carry and pass on drugs at primary school age because the law cannot deal with them carrying out 'an adult crime'.

Special Interest groups are removing certainty in the lives of our children and our lives by removing the meaning of fundamental words, male and female from a biological and scriptural perspective, and marriage from a scriptural perspective.

The special interest groups want recognition of diversity of gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity **but not of opinion**.... If we disagree on some of these subjects we are described in increasingly colourful adjectives such as evil, prejudiced, anti...

But, that's not true is it? And the 'silent 80%' are bending to the will of the 10% extremes at either end of the debate and so the expression 'bad things happen because good people do nothing' is more true than ever.

### **The answer is Jesus?**

The answer to all the world's problems is simply Jesus. If we understood the teaching of Jesus and communicated directly with him then we would all be more generous and loving and we would not have famine because there is enough food to go around and we would not have wars because they are a very bad solution to perceived grievances.

Did God intend us to achieve this state? Yes scripture describes that when Jesus returns there will be no more wars or sickness and we will live with him forever.

Did Jesus expect us to achieve this on earth? no because of our capacity to sin and because many would reject him and so he tells us to expect war and famine and we are reminded countless times that God does not take away the battles but is with us in the battles and the blessings. Will everyone find that place of peace.. on earth and ultimately in heaven? No because here now and even at the hour of our death many will reject Jesus.

So in the absence of following Jesus, the world applies a number of sticking plasters, short term solutions... legislation and then more legislation...and the woke agenda which has a misplaced desire to affirm that people can be whoever and whatever they like out of a kind of love, set against a backdrop that if our perspective of life is always about me, it will inevitably tread on other people's rights and opinions.

There is nothing I have experienced or seen in the world that wasn't anticipated by Jesus and so we need to share that with people who are having no exposure to the bible and yet are experiencing all the problems of being without Jesus.

Many are coming to a need for peace by putting up a buddha in their garden or house, have a look they are everywhere, or filling their spiritual hunger by making up a spiritual patchwork... That's karma as a woman said to me the other day!

But we need to know about Jesus and we need to KNOW Jesus and that comes from a relationship with him and you only build a relationship with someone if you spend time with them and talk to them ( prayer).

Paul said Faith is believing in what we hope for and what we do not see. But Faith is spelt RISK and as we take a risk then the Holy Spirit will equip us and guide us so we can see the

supernatural things that God intends to happen as Jesus said, 'as I have done you shall do greater things'. We see outbreaks of that but we all long for more don't we?

### **We need the attitude of Mary**

For that we need to aspire to be more like Jesus and coming full circle like Mary who when faced with an overwhelming task was able to say let it be unto me as you have said.

### **I'll finish with this story**

The story of the woman at the well is one of my favourites because I imagine I am alone with Jesus and have time with him where I know he will be interested in me and I can ask him all the questions I have.

A friend who was a very accomplished painter selling her pictures in central London wanted to thank Maria and myself for helping her marriage and her Faith journey and so asked what I would like her to paint. I immediately said the woman at the well please! What size would you like she said and I greedily said ohh this big please!

When she arrived to give me the painting I saw that it didn't look like that... here is the painting she gave me and told me that when she started to paint God gave her the scripture 'I am He'. I was disappointed... but I realise that it was not what I wanted... but what I needed... a reminder of who Jesus is and that I needed to put down my pride and focus on a relationship with Jesus the son of God.

I'm going to leave the painting here whilst we play a lovely Salvation Army song 'They need you, they need me , they need Christ'. Solus Christus

... through Christ Alone.

Thank-you