

Kington Baptist Church

MESSAGE BOARD – 67

Shall we look for another?

Now when John heard in prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and they said to Jesus, 'Are you really the one who should come, or shall we look for another?' Jesus answered, 'Blessed are those who do not take offence at me'. (Matthew 11.2-3, 6)

The astonishing thing is why anyone would take offence at Jesus! After all, as this passage says, Jesus went about doing good: *the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.* What is there to take offence at!

Well, nothing at all – until you listen to the claims Jesus made for himself. That's where the *offence* begins. Not that Jesus intended to give offence. Not at all. He came to bring light, truth, salvation and hope. But it was the claims that he made for himself that caused offence.

People seem to love the Jesus who healed and helped the sick and the poor. People are OK with Jesus – up to that point – the Jesus of folklore and as he is depicted in schmaltzy pictures. No problem there. The problem comes when we listen to his claims. The problem is what he says about himself.

In John's Gospel, for example, Jesus makes seven claims about himself. So what is so offensive about that? It is that he repeatedly claims that his is unique. He claims to be the only begotten Son of God; he claims to be the bread of life, the living water, the light of the world and so on. The point is that he is not saying that he brings light and will join with all others who also claim to bring light – he is constantly saying he is the *only* one! That's why people are offended at Jesus. He claims to be the Good Shepherd – and then says *everyone* else who has or will make such a claim are thieves and robbers! He claims to be the Light of the World – and says it is only as we follow *him* that we can avoid living in the dark! That's what people find so offensive!

Listen to this astonishing claim that he made: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* Now the point is this, and it's twofold: firstly, his claim to be the *one and only* 'way', 'truth' and 'life'. Secondly, that we come to God *only* through him – while at the same time telling us that we *must* come to God – that if we do not we will perish! That's the offence! His claim to be God the Son, the *only* Saviour and the *only* one through whom we can approach God. He was killed for making that claim. The world despises that – and would kill him again if they had the chance!

The tragedy is that this essential truth – that no one comes to the Father except through Christ – we could call it the *exclusivity* of Christ – is ignored even by those who claim to speak for him. For instance, we're told by leaders of the Church that as long as people 'pray' it really makes no difference if they have Christian faith or some other faith or of no faith at all. But Jesus insists we must pray through *him* or to *him*.

And that is the problem today. This is what the world won't tolerate. The world accepts Jesus in any other form – as healer, preacher, prophet, example, social reformer, liberator of women, political activist, and on and on. They enjoy endless debates about his contribution to any and all of those ideas and projects. What they won't tolerate is his claim to be the only begotten Son of God and the only Saviour of sinners. They reject that and ridicule his claim. That's the offence! His insistence that no one, no one at all, anywhere, without any exception, no matter how 'good', no matter how 'religious, no matter how many followers they may have is able to save except the Lord Jesus Christ – that we are told is what we mustn't say!

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not believe in the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath. (John 3.36)

The world is in turmoil – people look for help. They look anywhere and everywhere – except to Jesus Christ. This week I've heard people on the radio telling us what we need in this pandemic are breathing experts, 'digital countryside'(!); psychologists, psychiatrists and psychotherapists; pets and painting and singing classes; baking, sewing and candles. The world is scrabbling about looking for hope. The tragedy is people will not come to Jesus. That's the fatal choice! To build on sand, with no foundation. To put it bluntly – the world always chooses to believe the lie of the serpent rather than the Word of God – just as Adam and Eve did.

The question that John the Baptist asked: '*Are you the one, or shall we look for another?*' He had baptised Jesus, he heard the voice from heaven: '*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased*'. He pointed to Jesus and said: '*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*'. So, why does John – of all people – ask this question?

Because it mattered! Because salvation is vitally important. So he must be sure. Remember the two on the road to Emmaus? Speaking for all the others they said, '*We thought he was the one ... but ...*'. We are full of sadness and disappointment. We thought Jesus was the one, but he's dead.

And how did Jesus answer to their doubts? '*You shallow people! Why are you so reluctant to believe all that the prophets have said? All that has happen to me is just as they said it would happen!*' If you listen to and are guided by the Word of God you will recognise that I am the One who was promised; you'll understand who I am and what I do.

There is salvation in no one else; there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him. (Acts 4.12 and Hebrews 7.25)