

Sermon 30 January 2022 'Glorifying God.'

Isaiah 40:27-31 John 17:1-8

This prayer of Jesus, as this Gospel passage is sometimes known, takes place after the Last Supper and just before Jesus and his disciples retire to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was arrested. And so Jesus is looking to the cross where he will finally find glory with God. *'Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you.'*

It is interesting, and a little sad, that it is invariably in death that people find their glory. When someone dies we extol their attributes, their qualities, their achievements. I often find myself reflecting as I sit and listen to eulogies (and I have heard quite a few!) that it would be nice if all these things were said to the person while they were still alive. Sometimes they are, but all too often that is not the case. Something for us all to be mindful of, I think.

So why was the cross the glory of Jesus? And probably more importantly, how can we give glory to God?

To answer the first question very briefly, because in the end it is really a question to be addressed at Easter, the cross was the completion of his work and the beginning of his verification as the Son of God through the Resurrection. You obviously cannot have the Resurrection without the cross, but let's leave that discussion until Easter.

One way of giving glory to God is by obeying him. If a child is obedient to its parents, he/she honours those parents. In making that journey to the cross, Jesus was being extremely obedient to his Father. He knew he had to go through with it; he knew it was expected of him.

How does this apply to us? We know what is expected of us as children of God. We know what we can be capable of when we have faith in Jesus Christ, when we accept him into our lives. I refer to our reading from Isaiah – *'But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will and not faint.'* Isaiah 40:31. Let me tell you a little parable, the parable of the ducks.

There was this town where only ducks live. Every Sunday the ducks waddle out of their houses and waddle down the street to their church. They waddle into the church and squat in their proper pews. The duck choir waddles in and takes its place, and then the duck minister comes forward and opens the duck Bible. He reads to them, 'Ducks! God has given you wings! With wings you can fly! With wings you can mount up and soar like eagles. No walls can confine you. No fences can hold you. You have wings. God has given you wings, and you can fly like birds.' And all the ducks shouted, *'Amen!'* And then they all waddled home.

The best way we can glorify God is to take on board everything he has to offer us, and we look to Christ for the guide on that, and then to live it. There is really no point in coming to church, listening to his word, singing his praises, conversing with him through prayer, signing off with a well-intentioned 'Amen', and then going off into our daily lives and not reflecting that in our lives. In other words, not really changing but carrying on in very much the same way as we always have.

True faith must lead to growth. So how is this pertinent to our service of baptism today? Today our focus is on Tiaan, but the commitment undertaken by parents and godparents is relevant for every single one of us, both for ourselves and also for our young people. That commitment is encapsulated in the question posed earlier in our service, 'Do you commit to leading a way of life according to God's will?'

If we ourselves are unable to make that commitment, how on earth can we expect our young people to grow in the faith, to commit to a journey that leads to, not just an understanding of God's will, but a desire and willingness to live according to his will.

And on that note, I will conclude with a firm *Amen!*

Rev Warner Wilder