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Are we truly disciples of Jesus...really?

Bible Reading: John 8:31-38

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.' They answered him, 'We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free?'

Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there for ever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word. I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father.'

Reflection

I don't know about you, but in quite a few stages of my life, I have found myself in the same position as those Jews who doubted Jesus and questioned what authority he had. Fortunately, I didn't spend long in the 'wilderness' without Jesus, and following prayer he returned me to the fold, as it were. I thought it was just me, but in the past, both in ministry and in my previous life, I have come across many people in the same position. At some point in their lives the self-same thing happened.

In this reading, we hear of the Jews believing in both a superficial way and also the deeper way, the way of real discipleship that is described. The truth that makes the disciples free is not obtained by their own investigations but is revealed from above. The Jews had historically been politically dependent on foreigners but have always kept their religion. Jesus tells them that they cannot be free if they sin by wanting to kill Jesus, who declares that he has been seen in his Father's presence.

About four weeks ago now, it was the second Sunday of Easter. This is often known as Low Sunday, because after the wonderful celebrations of Easter Day the previous week, the day seems 'Low'. The Gospel for that day was the story of Thomas, the doubter. Although he was a follower of Jesus, did he really believe that Jesus was the Messiah? 'Unless I see the marks in his hands and feet, I shall not believe' that Jesus had risen from the dead. Of course, when *he did* see them, he instantly believed and powerfully exclaimed those well-known words, 'My God and King!' Thomas is remembered as the doubter; actually, I think he should be known as Thomas the believer, a *real* disciple of Jesus!

Many people talk about 'being free' – 'I am not slave to anyone' – whereas they are slaves to the very sin that they profess not to be. Jesus tells us that we too must shed the sin of disbelief and be a true disciple of his. This last sentence makes me wonder throughout some parts of my life, was I *really* a disciple of Jesus?

Prayer

Almighty God,
give us wisdom to perceive you, intelligence to understand you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, vision to behold you, a heart to meditate upon you,
a life to proclaim you;
through Jesus Christ Our Lord, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever.
Amen.

Response

Find a quiet space, preferably in a quiet area of your garden, or if Government regulations allow it, further out into the countryside. Read John 8: 31-38 again.

- Whereabouts in that reading do we feel that we are?
- Are we with those Jews who cannot understand Jesus?
- Are we obviously disciples of Jesus – what does that actually mean?
- If so, how do we spread the word of Jesus to others?
- What happens if we perhaps have doubts?
- Perhaps we could share our feelings with a group, such as a home group and find out their feelings?
- Can we pray through all those questions?

Revd Richard Kirlew, Chair of the Churches Together in England Churches Rural Group and of the Agricultural Chaplains Association