

God's Splendour - 19th April 2020

Isaiah 61:1-3

Good morning

Intro

Throughout this summer we're looking at;- Why are we here? What is St Swithin's all about? We're looking at the St Swithin's vision and values. When we started to look at the vision, last year at Sidholme, it was clear from all the feedback that somehow we weren't communicating clearly enough that the church is here because of God. God is the central character, it's not about us. We're not the story.

St Swithin's exists to display God's splendour, that's how Isaiah captures it beautifully in Is 61.3 displaying God's splendour. Jesus quotes these verses right at the beginning of his earthly ministry. The Westminster catechism states "What is the chief end of humankind? To glorify God and enjoy God forever" –During the great Reformation the great phrase was "soli deo Gloria," for the glory of God alone, We're here to display God's wonder, his majesty, his glory and his splendour . Our vision cannot be small and narrow, with the impression of shrinking, and being squeezed into a tight space but must reflect the vast expanse and great abundance of the fullness of God's life.

The splendour of the Father

So what do you think of when you think of glory, wonder, majesty and splendour? Some of us may think of one of the glorious sunsets over Bath, recently. As a family we've been enjoying a TV programme called **Race Across the World**, that follows teams racing across South America and this week one team visited the famous waterfalls at Iguazu. It's the most breathless and beautiful sight I've ever seen. It left them and me virtually speechless... in awe and wonder as we gazed on splendour.

When Christians encounter beauty and wonder in the world, we don't worship what's created, it points us to our creator. It points us to the majesty, wonder and splendour of God our creator. That God in his infinite love for his creation, created the world for us to enjoy, with His good plans and purposes so that we could join in and participate in the virtual dance that takes place between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This morning do you have any sense of the splendour of God the Father and his unconditional love for You? That God has good plans for your life? Does God's loving care for u shape how u treat others?

The splendour of Jesus

So, I wonder whether you have any hero's in your life? People who you really admire? People whose words you'd hang on? When we lived in Winchester there were a group of businessmen I used to meet up with who were in awe of Steve Jobs, one of the founders of Apple computers. He's been an extraordinarily successful and influential businessman, his effect on how we live our lives today has been profound. And they used to hang on his words, his lectures.....they were followers.

This Easter we've celebrated the person of Jesus Christ, the Only Son of God, who lived a perfect life, and died a dramatic and terrifying death, taking on himself all the sin, ugliness, darkness, evil and brokenness of the world. 3 days later he gloriously overcame

death, the only person in human history to do that so that we could experience freedom and forgiveness and know eternity with God as part of God's family. God's self-giving love, rescues us, redeems us, forgives us and adopts us when we put our faith and trust in him. This is glorious and wondrous good news.

When we grasp how good and extraordinary Jesus is, it changes everything. And we chose to follow Him. When we've received the greatest gift and greatest treasure anyone could have, we'll chose to follow, we'll want to share it and give it away, to spread the good news of Jesus

The splendour of the Holy Spirit

C.S. Lewis, in his Weight of Glory essay, says this. "we all pine". Each of us are filled with longing. There's a longing within all of us for joy, for love and for glory that we try and fill with all sorts of things, with romance, leisure, work, culture, achievements and more and more possessions, but none of those things satisfy our longing. It's only as the Holy Spirit of Jesus fills our lives that the assurance of our future inheritance becomes real, and the weight of his glorious presence Transforms, changes and renews us

As the Holy Spirit fills our lives with love, with hope, with peace and joy we start to realize what is possible. As the Holy Spirit cleanses us, washing away the dirt, guilt and shame and empowers us and renews us to live a new life so we begin to radiate the love and splendour of God to our needy world. It is Only in the power of the HS can we gloriously and wondrously come fully alive, live life in all it's fullness.

As the Holy Spirit get's to work we see that relationships can be healed, that the lonely find a family, that the poor are fed, the sick are healed, that the oppressed are released and set free, that people discover their calling in life, that rivers flow in the desert, that what's dead is coming back to life that we trade beauty for ashes as the Blessing of God rests on us.

Conclusion

When christians hear the message that we are to live for the glory of God, the way that often gets translated is that we must do lots of things for God, by running around, by being busy. But works righteousness never works. – it's a dead end.

What we see in scripture, is that God is glorified when we let God get to work in us. When we stop trusting in ourselves, but we stop in reverence and awe and receive God's life. St Swithin's is not some human- centered. It's about discovering who God is, what God has done and is doing for us and responding.

God's splendour is beyond comparison, and he wants us to experience it. St Swithin's is here to display God's splendour to the world. The vast majority of Bath seems unaware that someone and something so glorious, so wondrous is in their midst. We're called to radiate and shine for God in this generation, and God choses to use you and I to do that, what an awesome privilege, to display God's splendour

Let's pray – God of Splendour reveal yourself to us this day. Amen