

Celebrating the wonders of Jesus the Son

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 6 2026

Isaiah 61:1–3; I Corinthians 15:12–20; Matthew 2:1–12; Luke 4:14–21

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My approach over these weeks is to invite you to embark upon a journey of fresh discovery as we reflect upon and appreciate God as creator Father, redeeming Son and ever present and empowering Holy Spirit.

Throughout the weeks that follow I'd invite you to live with whichever element of the Trinity we have explored and reflect upon whatever unfolds in your thinking, living, praying and being.

Please don't try to figure out how the Trinity works!

Live with the tension of unknowing and allow the weekly journeys to enrich and broaden your journey of knowing, celebrating and understanding.

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Today, you may have noticed that our reflections and focus have been upon God as Jesus Christ – the redeeming Son.

The big focus, thus far, has been on our ability to see him – firstly in the midst of the madding crowd, and secondly with our minds constantly prone to distraction and distortion due to the many alternative views and perspectives on offer in this ideologically saturated world we live in.

Where's Jesus and who is Jesus? What a search so many have gone on to discover him! Take the wise ones – let me just say that again, the W-I-S-E ones – they left what we believe was their home in ancient Persia to travel to Bethlehem – a journey perhaps of 1,000 miles!

Can you imagine the conversation they had with their wives before departing – “so where are you off to today love? – not very sure – we've spotted a star so we're heading off to see what it means – will you be away long dear? – not sure – maybe aye maybe no” – and off they journeyed following yonder star and, upon getting close, shared news of their final stage with a local, seemingly friendly monarch.

Days later they came to the place where the star had stopped, and all their anticipated predictions came true– truly there was a boy – born to be King – their gifts entirely fitting, if not a little unusual for a new born – but bow down and worship him they duly did!

They sought out Jesus that they may bow down and worship him – that's why they were called the wise ones and so, friends, will we be if we too seek him out to worship him.

Another group we encountered in our service today were the Greeks – those at that time outwith the circle of God's people – but seekers they were, and indeed open they were to higher things in the purposes of God – to Philip they came with a simple request in their search for truth, meaning and purpose: “We would like to see Jesus.”

Their goal, I believe, was to discover someone they might follow, given the impact Jesus had already had on his disciples and those who had left all to follow him.

Where's Jesus and who is Jesus? What a search so many have gone on to discover him – the wise ones – the seeking ones – and of course the hopeful ones.

Two Marys went to the tomb, broken heartened, downcast, sorrowful, grieving and wondering what next – they too came seeking Jesus and were most certainly not disappointed – there in the garden, risen, alive, present, tangible, and comforting, was Jesus. From the depth of their pain and sadness they found him alongside them, speaking words of hope and direction – go tell the others!

Think back, if you will, over your life. Have you gone looking for Jesus?

You may have been like the wise ones analytically observing the signs, or like the Greeks - the open ones not afraid to ask the straightforward questions – show us Jesus – we'd like to meet him.

Or perhaps you've been like the Marys - around the family of faith – you've dared to believe – been a part of the family and yet things have gone pear shaped – faith's let you down – the church has let you down – it's people have let you down – life let you down.

Have you been there? Are you there today? If ever there was a time you needed to see Jesus – perhaps it is now.

Well, as we saw earlier, we can look to see what we find in the gospels – those little visual images revealing to us different aspects of his character, ways and identity.

Each of these help us to see Jesus, but to truly see him is to know him – to know his presence day by day – to follow him, as he invites us to, by walking in his footsteps and ways.

Back in the 12th century, Richard of Chichester captured such a sentiment in his prayer – made memorable by the musical *Godspell*:

“O dear Lord, three things I pray : To see thee more clearly, to love thee more dearly and to follow thee more nearly.”

Knowing *about* him is indeed one thing - and that is good - however *knowing him* is so much better.

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Let me tell something of my own story.

I was brought up in church: Sunday school – Bible class - Boys's Brigade – Youth Fellowship – even Young Worshippers League!

I knew a lot about Jesus, but only when came into my 20s did I begin to get to truly know him.

I discovered that the gate into this had a handle on my side, and when I opened that and opened more of my life to him, everything began to change. What difference did that make? It made a world of difference – no longer living for myself but for him.

Have you come to and opened that gate? It makes a world of difference, I believe.

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Many years later, someone once gave me a challenge – to sum up what difference Jesus makes to our lives, and to sum this up simply and succinctly.

Wow – that a bit of a challenge for a minister - the gospel simply and succinctly – but after some time I gave it a go...

1. *The past - forgiven*
2. *The present - purpose*
3. *The future – hope*

1. *The past has been forgiven* – no matter what or when or where. When I was a chaplain at Low Moss prison in Glasgow, I had the great privilege to enter the prison with a key for everyone – a key that would unlock an inner freedom from everything they had ever done that was offensive to both God and humanity!

Last week we looked at the amazing story of the prodigal son. Wow ! Now there's a glorious example of a past forgiven and told to us so that we might know that this is the unconditional love and forgiveness that God, through Jesus, offers us!

2. *The present has a purpose* – Jesus found his in the scriptures as he picked up the designated scroll in his local kirk or synagogue – from Isaiah 61 his purpose was revealed.

For each of us, this too might set out for us a purpose in our Christian calling; or perhaps we might go to Matthew 25, which sets out the areas of global concern that God would love us to sort out: To address the needs of the hungry, thirsty, needy, strangers, sick and imprisoned. Good starter methinks! Then there is the invitation for us to go and make disciples – faith and action at the heart of our calling and purpose!

“Who me?” you may say. Well, when we put our life into God's hands, we discover that he is able to take us as we are and use us with our unique gifts and abilities.

Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, identifies five key areas that God can use : this through our SHAPE...

S - Spiritual gifts

H - Heart and passion

A – Abilities

P – Personality – we've all got them

E – Experiences in and of life

Wow ! A present with purpose.

3. *The future is charged with hope* – Friends, to be able to face the prospect of whatever lies beyond this life with hope is at the very heart of the gospel and what Jesus accomplished for us and revealed to us. In the early days of the Christian church in Corinth some folks were beginning to question this, so Paul writes to them seeking to emphatically affirm : “If for this life we have only hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.”

Let me tell you the story of my friend Tom – diagnosed with terminal cancer at 50. I went to visit him in a Glasgow hospital. My opening words were, “Tom, I’m absolutely gutted.”

Tom’s response: “Don’t be gutted David, my life, though not as long as I’d hoped, has been good, and through my faith I have no fear of the future.”

Here was I, meant to be the ministering one, being ministered to about what having hope really looked like when the rubber hits the road!

When Jesus said, “Come follow me”, his invitation was not just for the blessings to be found in this life – our past forgiven – our present with purpose. It was all of that, but more than that.

When his invite comes and we receive it to “Follow him”, it is to follow him into the next life whenever that may be. Ready?