

#HaveFaith22: Last Gospel Commissioning – 10.11.22

John 1.1-18

“To those who have faith in His Name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

Not only sheep or lambs, not just servants or friends, vines in the vineyard but children of God”

Sons and daughters of the one without whom nothing was made

I have two words as we go our separate ways after such a super-abundant banquet together, with such beloved family. (On that thank you so much for giving of your hearts in this time – there is so much buried treasure in Lancashire).

Two words: HAVE FAITH.

John’s Gospel was written (John 20.31) so we might HAVE FAITH that Jesus is the Son of God, and that by FAITH you may have life in his Name. This is how things really are.

When go home from a conference we could be cynical; ‘back to the real world’. But no, the Good Shepherd goes ahead of us. The ONE without whom nothing was made that has been made. He is the ONE who FEEDS US. I am so thankful to God for the beautiful tasters.

Seeing the vista of the Bridegroom’s wedding banquet

Seeing in new ways – after our multi-sensory dive into John’s Gospel in the super-abundant waters of his Spirit.

Seeing dear brothers and sisters in new encounters as there has been a beautiful overflow of those streams of living water of His Spirit.

Seeing as they really are...

These are not just coincidences ... that you sat next to X or bumped into Y. Though I do officially apologise to Philip Venables for sitting next to him in the comedy last night!

We often find ourselves saying: ‘I might be mad’ ‘You’ll think I’m bonkers’. But these coincidences, synchronicities, heart-warming encouragements are the design of the One who made the universe; without him nothing that was made that has been made. You are the design of the one who made the universe – without whom nothing was made that has been made.

The Word became flesh and has made his dwelling amongst us.

I loved the off cuff line from Richard Baukham on Tuesday. He’s done lots of Diocesan conferences but this so vibrant. He said ‘it seems like you’ve been at the wedding of Cana. You’ve seen a one miracle and you’re expecting a few more’.

I love that John doesn’t call them miracles – they’re so normal he calls them signs. That’s how Sam Cheesman, our Bishops’ Chaplain, put it to me.

The Word has been dwelling with us ... there are so many signs of His presence –

As we go home today ...

I have faith for his signs ... signs which unlock His truth in our hearts that we are children of God, our Father who is full of grace and truth.

Sheep know my voice. They don't listen to the hired hand who cares nothing for the sheep.

May we not listen to the voice of the father of lies who comes only to steal and kill and destroy

Instead, we know our Father; he is full of grace and truth.

I have two teenage sons. When I'm not feeding them, I'm the late night taxi driver for them. They love the dark!

It seems only yesterday when bedtime was at 7pm.

When Harry was a toddler he had a phase of scary dreams. There's a monster on the wardrobe. You'd switch on the light and the monster disappears. In the light of Jesus, darkness has to reveal itself. Monsters disappear to nothing.

I wonder if there are a few monsters from the Father of lies lurking in our hearts.

The Lie that it's too late – but with Jesus, the time is always now, eternal life starts now – children of God now

The Lie of Shame – there's always a crowd ready to stone you...

“Woman, who is it that condemns you?” says Jesus. God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him (John 3.17). He is here today to save you – to bind up - from shame and condemnation and release his truth that children of God now

The Lie of Rejection - you're not good enough to be a son of God, to be a daughter of the King. Into the light are the children of God.

The Lie of Fear: My family is a family of worriers but perfect love casts out all fear; we know we are loved children of God.

So may we go in faith. Leave with faith, full of his grace and truth.

Let's be communities of joy – healthy churches transforming communities – with the Bridegroom himself; in our parishes, workplaces, schools, prisons hospitals, businesses, the arts, sports and sciences, our government and business.

May Lancashire be renewed by the fire of His Gospel and our nation claimed for Jesus Christ.

+Jill Lancaster