

Come and See 2024: The Way of Love

Two Treasures: [Watch on YouTube](#)

Mark's gospel tells us that Jesus public ministry began when he was baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptist, many people came from all over the country to hear John preaching and went down into the water to be baptized as a sign of repentance and faith, but when Jesus was baptized something remarkable happened...

As Jesus was coming up out of the water Mark writes, "he saw the heavens torn apart and the spirit descending like a dove on him and a voice came from Heaven, you are my son the Beloved in you I am well pleased."

Jesus whole identity his sense of who he is, is grounded in that one word beloved. Your identity and mine begin there as well in understanding that we are deeply loved by God our maker but often it takes a lifetime to discover and understand this love God has for us. Your identity and mine is not primarily about whether we are young or old, rich or poor, our racial background, our gender, our sexuality, whether we are married or single, it's not about what we do for a living or where we went to school or how many likes we have on social media. Our identity is grounded in the deep powerful truth that God loves us. You are deeply loved, appreciated, known, valued and called into friendship with God.

Most of us spend our lives trying to grow in our understanding of that love, it's a love we cannot earn so we will never feel we deserve to be loved, it's a love which we need to receive by faith and trust and live in that faith. So just take a moment to try on that idea for size, imagine what life would be like if you could really believe and understand that you are loved - if you could see the whole length and breadth and height and depth of God's steadfast love for you. How would that change your anxieties and fears; the way you approach this week; your closest friendships; the way you live your life?

"We love because God first loved us" writes John in his first letter, this one word beloved this vital truth transforms the way we see the first two Commandments, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and you shall love your neighbour as yourself."

The invitation to love God and love others are the greatest Commandments only because we ourselves are loved beyond measure. People who do not know that they are loved are unable themselves to give that love, we need to understand that God's love is steadfast, strong, merciful, forgiving and everlasting. Understanding that love is the key to being able to love, being able to love is the key to life. Some people grow up in the Christian faith and know that they are loved by God from early in their childhood. Many others return to God much later in life after many difficult experiences, it's vital to understand that when we turn in our lives and want to know God and love God again at whatever age. God already loves us, God is longing for us, reaching out to us.

Jesus tells a story of a father of two sons, both have to rediscover their father's love. The younger one leaves home and spends his inheritance on reckless living, when he's spent all he has he returns expecting to stammer out an apology and live as a servant in his father's house, but that is not the way. The father in the story is constantly watching out for his son to return, when he's still far off on the road he runs to meet him, he holds him in a deep embrace, he puts a ring on

his finger and shoes on his feet, he has never stopped loving him. The elder brother has lived at home for so long but has become estranged from his father, he is angry and jealous when the younger son comes home. Again, his father loves him, comes to him, pleads with him to come and join the celebration.

We love because God first loves us. Jesus tells a pair of dramatic and exciting parables about the inestimable value of this love and the difference it makes. The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure, hidden in a field which someone found and hid then in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, on finding one pearl of great value he went and sold all he had and bought it. The treasure and the Pearl are discovering how much you are loved by God, in a love that searches and holds and embraces and saves and sustains and gives life.

Some people seem to discover that love almost by chance, but Christians would say by God's providence. Like the treasure someone might find in a field while they're digging for something else. Some people discover that love because they are searching for meaning and purpose and love in many different places, like a merchant looking for the one pearl, the pearl of great price.

But when you find that treasure, when you discover that pearl of great price you know it is worth more than anything else in the world. It's worth selling your house and everything you own to understand. This is the most precious thing of all, the best this world affords to know God's love in Jesus because this love really does change everything and this is why we're called to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves, because this is the way God in Jesus loves us totally, completely, offering his life for us and to us as his friends and as God's children.

The letter to the Ephesians contains this profound and beautiful prayer for all of us which reflects the truth that it takes a lifetime to understand God's deep and transforming love and to set that love at the heart of who we are. This is my prayer for you and for everyone journeying with come and see in Paul's words, "I pray that you may have the power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

So what does it mean to live out of this deep understanding of the love of God we'll begin to explore that next week, come and see...