**Message 09/08/20 Bergerac.**

**Its good to be together this morning as the Lords people to spend time in worship and looking into God,s word together ;**

**A big thank you this morning to all who have stepped up at this time to enable us to meet together despite the health crisis .**

**For all the effort that has gone into enabling us to hold a service while respecting the regulations is really great to be meeting phsically as opposed to virtually.**

**This morning we are going to look at the subject of the coming again of the Lord Jesus. A great meeting that is in our spiritual diaries as christians.**

**Karine challenged us a few weeks ago as she led the service in worship asking us if we were prepared as individuals and as church for that meeting**

**At the time it struck me that as a subject sadly we dont hear many sermons on and I was left wondering how much we understand about the subject. So this morning we are going to unpack this subject and seek to understand a bit more clearly what are the implications for us as individual christians and as a church collectively**

**I love eschatology which is the study of christian doctrine and this coming again of the Lord Jesus is known in the world of escatology a s « The Rapture »**

**We have the great doctrinal truths of crucifiction ,ressurection etc and the rapture is also an important christian doctrine. It is known as the second coming of the Lord Jesus. He came the first time as a babe at Bethlehems manger to go to the cross at calvary to save His people from their sins. The second coming or the rapture is when he comes back to the air for his people,.Then there is another coming after that when he will come back to the earth with his saints. All sounds a bit complicated but to help us unpack this this morning and**

**To help us understand a bit better what we are talking about, lets turn to scripture.**

**Our first reading this morning is from John’s gospel chapter 14 v 1 – 4.**

**Here we have the Lord Jesus speaking and there are a few important facts that we need to grasp from these verses.**

**The first is. Who was the Lord Jesus speaking to ? Was it to the world at large ? the multitude ? the religious leaders of the day ? No it was to a select group of people. His disciples. So the first important point that we need to grasp this morning that this truth was for a select group of people.**

**Could I ask you this morning, are you a follower of the Lord Jesus ? Are you one of his disciples ? Are you in a real relationship with Him ? This has to be the starting point if we want to be involved in the second coming of the Lord Jesus.**

**He made it very clear in his statement that He was coming back. He says emphatically. If I go I WILL come again and receive you unto myself.**

**We need to take note here that our Lord Jesus has made a statement, a promise and he never changes what he says. We can prove that from the bible and have many instances, proofs that His words are true.**

**We are not dealing here with the statement of a politician, maybe,perhaps, and sadly often a change of mind,an uncertainty. We are dealing with the God of heaven and he said I WILL come again.**

**Thomas asked how do we know the way ? Jesus said I am the way the truth and the life , no man cometh unto the father but by me..**

**So I return again to my question are we a disciple ? Have we accepted the Lord Jesus into our hearts and life ? Do we know Him personally ? Are we a new creation in Christ Jesus.**

**In these verses the Lord Jesus said I am going . You might be asking this morning has He gone ?**

**Our second reading this morning is from Acts 1 v 7-11.**

**Here we are left in no doubt that the Lord Jesus has gone. The bible says He ascended up into heaven !**

**So I am sure the question that is on everybody,s mind this morning is When is He coming again ? Many people over the years have tried to put a date on the coming again of the Lord Jesus and no surprise they have all been wrong ! Why ?**

**Well the answer is found once again in scripture in Matthew 24 v36.**

**Very clear ! Who knows the date. No one apart from God himself. Our God has a calendar, a time line which does not rely on Google or microsoft ! It was created in eternity past before the world was created. In our study of the bible it is good to have an understanding of the calendar of God. It is all clearly laid out from Genesis to Revelation. At this moment in time we are living in what is commonly known by theologians as « The day of grace » This period of time started on the day of crucifiction when the Lord Jesus died for the sins of the world and the temple curtain was torn in two to signify the finishing of the era of living under Jewish law as laid out in Exedos and Leviticus in the old testament. This period in God’s calendar will finish with the rapture when the Lord Jesus returns for those who have put their faith and trust in Him for salvation. God’s calander I find fascinating and perhaps the subject for another day as we have the whole plan in the bible right to the end of time to the scenes listed in the book of Revelation.**

**Where does that leave us then ? and I go back to Karine’s question of a few weeks ago . Are we prepared as disciples for the coming again of the Lord Jesus ?**

**In the bible the church is always seen as the « bride of Christ » Having two daughters who have been married I understand a bit about weddings and brides ! The planning starts long before the day, The wedding dress, the hairdresser, the effort and the detail that goes into that day is enormous and as the day approached the levels of preperation intensified. They wanted to look their very best for the bridegroom If there had been something about them that was not quite right they would have been heartbroken, upset, ashamed. If there had been a mark on their wedding dress, if their hairstyle had not been to perfection. What about us in our preperation as the bride of Christ ? What preparation are we making in our life ?**

**After our initial step of faith in becoming a disciple, the next phase in our preparation for the rapture is surely sanctification. Another big bible word but in its simplest form simply means, set apart by God for God. The question today is are we seeking to live a sanctified life as christians ? Do our words’,actions, way of life become those who are waiting on the coming again of the Lord Jesus. I examine my own heart and life this morning also and find it very challenging to live a sanctified life that becomes a true disciple of the Lord Jesus. On our own it would be well nigh impossible but remember each one of us as believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. Remeber Paul said to the believers in the church at Corinth that their bodies were the dwelling place, the home of the Holy Spirit. When we become christians the Holy Spirit enters our hearts and lives and we must allow Him to work to help us to live sanctified lives for Him. We must live our lives as those who are ready for the bridegroom. This does not mean that our lives are put on hold, that we stagnate, far from it. We must be active in our christian lives. The Holy Spirit is likened unto a well of water springing up within us. You think of a spring, a source of water. In France we have many mighty rivers. The Seine, The Rhone, The Loire and here our Dordogne river and as they reach their destination they become mighty , important,impressionable rivers there for all to see. A source of life, a useful place for transport, recreation, known by the world for what they are. Does that describe our lives ? It is good to have plans, ambitions,aspirations but they should always be stamped by the words. God willing, ! Remember the farmer in Luke’s gospel. His life was all about himself ! He had forgotten that it was the Lord who had blessed him with a good harvest. This will I do, This will I do was the story of his life. How does that story end ? Thou fool tonight your soul will be required. He was no longer going to be here on earth. He had made a huge mistake he had left God out of his life. Are we involving God in our decision making ? Are we asking Him about career choices ? Are we asking Him about marriage partner ? Are we asking Him about our life choices. The route of every christian should be to take every aspect of our life to God in prayer. He is always availabe,**

**The second question Karine posed was ,are we prepared as a church. Very simply , we are the church of Christ on earth as christians and also here in Bergerac we are a group of christians who make up what is known as the local church.The church in scripture is made up of of what the bible describes as living stones, with the Lord Jesus as the cornerstone, the principle stone and Him also as the builder. We have the blueprint, the description of how we should be doing church in the New Testament epistles. It is clearly described there and following this masterplan helps us to be prepared as church for the rapture. Like everything in the christian life church starts with individuals. Those of us who have become disciples ,,worshiping together,working together. The christian life was never intended as a solo effort. This period of confinement has brought home to us as a couple how much we missed real, not virtual christian company.**

**The local church is intended for that and hopefully as the church progresses here in Bergerac my prayer would be that it will be a church that is prepared for the rapture, that as community we might enjoy fellowship together,worship together and above all seek to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus. As we progress with our Vitality programme God willing this will help to increase that sense of community, that sense of mission and our love and affection for each other**

**We have examined the concept, the preparation but finally what about the mechanics of the rapture. Again let us turn to scripture to 1 Thessalonians 4 for our final bible reading.**

**Here we have the beievers in the church at Thessolanica asking Paul what was going to happen, especially with regards to those christians who had died before the day of the rapture.**

**Paul talks about those who were asleep in Jesus.**

**For me this is a lovely description as it speaks of peace. For me there is no better sight than to see for example a baby sleeping. There is an air of peace, calmness, security. For us also we find it easy to fall asleep if the conditions are right,that feeling of security. We have also the example of Lazarus in the New Testament where the Lord Jesus described him as being asleeep.**

**So on the day of the rapture the bible tells us that the dead in Christ(those who are asleep in Jesus) Note Paul very clearly says the dead in Christ, those people , those disciples who had put their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus, who had the knowledge of sins forgiven would rise first, then we if we are still alive at the time of the rapture will be taken from the earth with them to meet the Lord together in the air ! This takes as back to our reading in Acts 1 where the disciples were looking up. This meeting will take place in the air. What a gathering that will be. This bride that has been being prepared, those believers from every tribe and nation we are all going to rise together to meet our saviour and the bible says we shall then forever be with the Lord ! What a prospect, what a wonderful event to look forward. The bible tells that we will all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye and this old body that we have with all its defects will be changed and we will be changed into His image !**

**Mind blowing and difficult to grasp with our minds today but what a future we have as christians to look forward to.**

**So let us from this day forward as we are encouraged by this meeting that is in Gods calendar increase our preperations, live in the light of His coming and go on and achieve great things for our God in the time left to us before he comes again !**