



Sermon Notes

Term – Spring Term

Series – 1 Corinthians 13

Gathering & Date – 10/5 7th April 2019

Title – Closer not clarity

Preacher – Natalie Shepherd

Reading – 1 Corinthians 13:4-13

Main message of this talk in one sentence: When we seek clarity, God seeks closeness

Main points –

In the 'now and not yet' of God's kingdom coming here on earth, there are prophecies, tongues and knowledge that help us see and understand God in part, but not fully. Paul likens our understanding to that of a child who has not yet grown up to see things as they really are.

We see things like a reflection in a mirror. In the days when Paul was writing, mirrors were made of polished metal, not glass, so the reflection they gave was very poor or dim. The reflection may have been indistinct or puzzling. Sometimes we look to knowledge and prophecy as we try and understand our lives and the world around us more clearly. Paul says that when Jesus returns, we will see him face to face. Seeing God this clearly will bring all things into perspective and changes our hearts.

Gideon and Jacob were Old Testament characters who were looking for clarity about the past and also about their futures. Both had significant, face-to-face encounters with God that changed their hearts.

When we want clarity, God wants us closer. He's always looking for an invitation in.

In the New Testament letters, the words faith, hope and love are often found described and linked together. Faith is the trust, reliance and confidence in God. Hope is an extension of faith; the expectation that is based on the promises of God. But when Jesus returns we will no longer need faith because we will see and we will no longer hope because we will experience.

In verse 8 and verse 13, love is described as never failing and eternal. As we take time to get closer to Jesus now and know him and his love, we will have a foretaste of all that is to come.

For further thought and prayer –

1. How is the analogy of the mirror helpful in thinking about the 'now and not yet' of the Kingdom?
2. How do your questions about the past or uncertainty about the future affect your relationship with God?
3. Reflect on the impact meeting God face-to-face had on Gideon (Judges 6) and Jacob (Genesis 32).
4. Where is there a challenge for you in 'when we want clarity, God wants us closer'?
5. Spend time with God seeking his face without any agenda or expectation?