

Introduction

- Change that comes when we become Christians:
 - cf change on adoption...
 - unlike, say, taking up bird-spotting or knitting...!
- Huge, fundamental change
 - series exploring that change and some of the basic implications in how we live over next few weeks
 - might find John White, "The Fight", or David Watson's "Discipleship" helpful books

Sorting a cupboard

- Have you ever gone to sort out a cupboard, and found there's far more in there than you bargained for? Where did it all come from?
 - I've had many moves - you'd think I'd have learned to chuck stuff away!
 - I still go into cupboards and drawers and dig our buried treasure - books, letters, essential bits of long dead bicycles - all sorts of fascinating, un-throw-out-able clutter!!!
- As we turn to this passage of John's gospel, it can feel a bit like that - like rediscovering lost treasures! (not clutter!!)

1. Jesus' Presence Brings Peace

- Wider context of this part of John's gospel - farewell discourses, reassurance and final advice to his disciples before his death, before their bereavement of friend and leader, as well as Lord.
 - all way from John 13:31 - 17:26 (chapter 17 is Jesus' prayer for disciples)
- Large part of the point is **to bring peace to their troubled hearts**
 - that's implicit all the way through...
 - ...and its explicit just a verse on from where we read:
- (John 14:27) *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*
- But as well as seeking to reassure them with such promises, Jesus does something else:
 - **Jesus promises his own presence.**
 - (v. 18, NIV) *"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."*
 - Implication is that his presence brings peace, brings security, brings stability.
 - his presence in their lives changes things

Whithaugh Tale

- SU camp; Whithaugh Park; >100 boys; highlight...night exercise!
- Site & suitability; darkness of Easter.
- Boys went out in groups, with a leader, to complete a course.
- Eldest group went last; had been around previous year.
- Psyched up!!! Remember last year's ducking!
- Realised we'd overdone things; big lads; people could be hurt by accident!
- Alan & I (ACLs) went to head off trouble.
- I was nervous, worried, even scared - bigger than me!
- But Alan's presence changed things completely - he's a big lad! Can take care of himself - and those around him.
 - his presence brought peace
- In the end nothing happened; they completed the course; everyone went to bed!
- **But, his presence had brought peace.**

Real Peace

- Guy called Ambrose Bierce, in his "The Devil's Dictionary", defined peace thus:
 - "In international affairs, a period of cheating between two periods of fighting."
- However wryly amusing that definition might be, we often carry that kind of stunted understanding of peace over into other areas:
 - real peace is not merely the absence of war, or of conflict.
 - rather, the peace Jesus gives by his presence is the kind that allows us to face our difficulties and conflicts, not run from them.
 - to go through the hard times; to struggle with our own failures rather than hide from them.

This is the real peace Jesus' presence brings.

2. Jesus' Presence Brings Obedience

- Second benefit Jesus' presence brings is obedience.
- My guess that the first picture that springs into your mind at this point is of a rowdy school classroom suddenly becoming quiet as the headmaster walks in!
 - that would merely be the obedience of fear!
- Certainly not compatible with the kind of peace we've been talking about!
- Jesus links obedience with love - vs.15 & 21, bracketing the section we read.
- Rather than the obedience of the headmaster, its the obedience of the driving instructor!
- Now, I know not many people loved their driving instructor - I'd be a bit worried if you did! - but think about the relationship...
- If you really want to learn to drive, you learn to obey your instructor's instructions.
- Place your trust in them, and in due course you'll be able to drive:
 - they know, and its their presence, picking up on your errors, sometimes using that second brake (very disconcerting!), that keeps you safe as you learn, that directs your efforts to where you need to put in more work and practise...
- Jesus desires your obedience, not because he's some kind of megalomaniac, but because he loves you and seeks the best for you.
 - (John 10:10) "I have come that you might have life, and life in all its fullness."
- His presence makes that obedience possible - through especially through the guiding and strengthening power of the "other Counsellor", the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7).
- Second benefit Jesus brings through his risen presence:
- **Jesus' presence brings the possibility of obedience.**

3. Jesus' Presence Brings Intimacy

- Final benefit Jesus' risen presence brings is that of intimacy with the Lord himself.
 - not simply the peace of his presence, knowing he's looking out for us...
 - nor just that God's best way of living, the way of obedience, becomes possible through his presence.
- More than either of those things:
 - Jesus' risen presence makes possible a level of unprecedented intimacy, a depth of relationship otherwise unavailable.
- For he promises that through the Spirit he will live in every believer.
 - (v.17, NIV) "...for he lives with you and will be in you."
 - (v.20, GNB) "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you."
- And all of this comes "on that day" - the day Jesus rose...
- We do not have a faith whose heart is in the obedience to rules.
- We do not have a faith whose heart lies in rituals or ceremonies.
- We do not have a faith whose heart is the feel-good factor of belonging.

- No, we have a faith whose heart lies in a relationship...
 - a relationship of such depth and joy and care and love and intimacy as we have never known.
- Relationship with Jesus Christ, with the very son of God - yet one who refused to relate to his disciples as servants, and called them his friends (John 15:15).
- He put his trust in them, he opened himself to them.

- Risen, working through the Spirit and not confined to the limitations of an earthly body, he is able to engage each one of us in that same deep way.

- The final benefit of Jesus' presence made possible through the resurrection is the relationship he yearns to enter into with us - not of a spectator, standing on the sidelines of our life watching our progress and sometimes cheering us on!
- No - he gives himself to us and for us, as a marriage partner should to husband or wife, as the best of best friends do...
 - ...and he expects and looks for and yearns for the same in return - a growing love and desire for the Lord, for his ways, for his very presence.

Conclusion

- Jesus' presence: peace, obedience, intimacy
 - we'll be looking at prayer, at reading the Scriptures, at sharing our faith, at the devil's opposition, at guidance over the coming weeks
 - building blocks of the Christian life
 - their purpose is to bring us or to keep us aware of Christ's presence
 - not more rules to obey, but structure to support us being focused on the Lord

- May we be reminded of his goodness for us today
 - and as we go on through this series, helped to live out his presence in our daily living