

Jesus is Lord

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

Philippians 2:5-11

Matthew 28:16-20

Part 1

[Images of a teacher, a conductor, a shepherd, and Gareth Southgate on the screen]

So let's stick with the last picture. Who's the guy in the middle?

Gareth Southgate.

What's his job?

- England Men's football manager
- To win! (or to get the team to win!)
- To lead the team

He's The Boss

– but to be a good boss, he also has to do some of the other roles in the quiz picture

He's responsible for the plan, the tactics, for getting everyone to work together on the day – bit like a conductor, working with lots of skilled and gifted people, and getting them to play together. They have to follow him.

He's a bit like a teacher. Making sure his team have the skills they need. Not do it himself, but see that things like training and fitness, and 'being ready' are sorted out. He encourages them, pushes them when they need it. Praises them when they've made progress.

He's a bit like a shepherd. Making sure his players are ok. That they have the right food to eat, enough sleep and so on. And that they are protected – eg from the press and social media. He stands up for them, supports them, "has their backs."

It's all part of being The Boss.

And if you think about it – all those roles are also pictures of Jesus.

Jesus is like a shepherd – caring for us, watching over us, protecting us [Psalm 23 images]

Jesus is like a teacher – he told stories and explained things [Good Samaritan, Pearl]. Showed us how to live – welcoming, forgiving, learning to live God’s way.

And like a conductor. He shows us the way and we need to follow him – not anyone or anything else.

It’s all part of being The Boss.

Today we’re thinking about the idea that Jesus is Lord

Lord’s not a word we use much today
[Lord Farqaad image, Lords cricket ground image]

So, if we’re struggling with it, perhaps the way to think of it is that Jesus is our Boss.

He’s the one who has our backs
He’s the one who teaches and encourages us
He’s the one we follow.

Jesus - the Boss.

Jesus is Lord Part 2

So – we’ve just been thinking about Jesus being “the Boss” – the boss of the team, the boss of our lives

About being in Jesus team, we might say

So – what might that look like?

So many things to think about, but for now I’d like to briefly pick up on three things from this morning’s readings....

Justice
Service
Sharing Good News

So, first – justice..

At the end of the OT passage God says this:

“I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak.... I will feed them with justice.”

At the heart of God’s message and Jesus’ ministry is a focus on the weak, the poor, the marginalised. Those with no family. The outsider. Those seeking shelter and sanctuary. Matthew’s gospel tells us that Joseph and Mary and Jesus were asylum seekers in Egypt.

Justice for people- and justice for the planet, as Paul was saying last week. And in many cases the two are intertwined. Cutting carbon emissions may mean a massive change in the way we live here in the UK. Not cutting carbon emissions is already making life almost impossible across large swathes of the planet.

As people on Jesus’ team we too are called to be people of justice. In our daily lives, and in the ways we use our influence – with family, with friends, at the ballot box. Alone we may not be able to solve the world’s problems. But we can be *part of* God’s solution.

So, what else might being on Jesus’ team involve?

Our NT reading said this about Jesus

...of his own free will he gave up all he had,
and took the nature of a servant.....

He was humble and walked the path of obedience....

Being on Jesus team is about living a life of love, humility and service

And – as with the justice stuff we’ve just talked about – when I look around this parish I see many many examples of this happening every day. And I am

absolutely sure that what we see is only a tiny fraction of what actually quietly goes on day in and day out.

And yet.... I do think we need to remember the end of that passage I just quoted

He was humble and walked the path of obedience *all the way to death—his death on the cross.*

Sometimes being on Jesus' team means going to places we would really rather not go. (Playing out of position in the football analogy!)

Loving people we would really rather not have anything to do with. Having the courage and determination to try something that feels totally scary and alien.

But doing it because we are on Jesus' team.

And then thirdly, we come to the Gospel reading for this morning

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

And maybe this is the one that fills us with dread. Yet, in practice, a large part of this is what we have already been talking about. If you did the Lent Course with the 5 marks of Mission – aka The Five Ways we see where God is at work” – you will know that caring for others, and having a heart of justice and the planet are three of those marks.

We are doing lots of this already – in our lives.

And also maybe more than we realise, in when we speak.

Because actually it doesn't mean that we are all called to expound Christian doctrine to every passing stranger – thank goodness, because most people don't want to hear that!

As humans, mostly what we do is tell each other stories about what's happened to us. We're sharing the Good News

When we tell someone that there's something very special about the atmosphere at Messy Church, and we think it might be God.

When we invite someone to the Welcome Café, and then to a Band Concert, and then to the Carol Service, and introduce them to other people, and someone says how being part of this Church community has made their life so much fuller and kinder - and that they have never known any other group which makes them feel that way – and they wonder if there is something in this God business after all?

And we (and others) experience it

When we (or they) share a concern with a Christian friend, who listens – really listens – and then says, I'll pray for you.

Jesus gave this instruction to his first disciples. They told others. Those others told others, until finally, 2,000 years later, someone told us.

We 'teach' each other. We learn from each other.

So let's just take a moment, and in that moment –

Maybe we'd like to think about who here we are 'learning from' through their lives, their actions, their love and their words?

And who might we be teaching through our lives, their actions, our love and our words?

And after the service, maybe go and have a conversation with those people.

Encourage each other.

And having been encouraged – go and do more of it!

So we've thought about Being On Jesus' team

About

Justice

Loving Service

Sharing the Good News

Big stuff

And if it all sounds a bit daunting, then here are a couple of thoughts to finish with

Firstly, there is a bit of a tendency in British culture to regard the manager of the England Men's football team as God. Spoiler Alert – he is not!

The Good News for us on Jesus team is that actually Jesus **is** God. He is God and he has our backs.

And whilst ultimately, one of the key roles of the football manger is to pick the team,

God doesn't work that way.

Jesus invites everyone to be on his team.

It's up to us to choose whether to join in, or to stay in the stands, cheering others on, but not actually getting involved.

And whether you're pondering stepping on to the pitch, or have been part of the team for a long time, remember this...

the best football managers have almost always been players first. Jesus knows what it is to be human. He has been here, walked lived, laughed, loved and died here. He knows what it is like. And he will never let us down. We can trust him.

And whatever happens to Gareth Southgate after the Euros – Jesus is with us “to the end of the age”

In other words, for ever and ever.

Amen