

Letton Hall - The D Factor - Talk 2 - 'I Am The Lord Your God

We started our journey yesterday evening thinking about Jesus calling His first disciples and how Jesus chooses people who He thinks have the potential to be like Him.

Jesus said to His first disciples 'Come, follow me' and they stopped what they were doing and changed the direction of their lives to follow Jesus and as you'll discover as we go along this week they didn't really know what they were doing me didn't get it all right but they started by saying yes to being called by Jesus.

So we finished last night thinking about how Jesus says those same words to us 'Come, follow me'.

So tonight we're going to continue that journey and what you'll find as we go these sessions is that all of us are in very different places in our following of Jesus.

Some of you will decided to follow Jesus a while ago,

Maybe for some of you it's been a gradual thing you've grown up with,

Maybe some of you are still figuring out what it means to follow Jesus

And perhaps there's even some of you who last night heard this idea that Jesus calls us to follow Him for the first time.

And that's all ok because we're all at different places on that discipleship journey.

So Jesus calls His first disciples and invites them to follow Him...and those disciples change the focus of their lives onto Jesus and that's what we're thinking about tonight. The focus of our lives and in particular the phrase Jesus is Lord.

How many of you have ever used or sung something about God or Jesus being Lord?

Now how many of you think you have an idea what that means? (If you can be honest that would be great because it won't just be you!)

It's ok if you don't understand what it means we're going to unpack it tonight...even if you do hopefully God will give you a greater understanding of it.

So what I'd like you to do to start with is talk to the person next to you about what you think saying 'Jesus is Lord' means.

Discussion & feedback from that discussion

Ok, lots of ideas about what it might mean.

Lord is one of those words that crops up a lot in the bible and I want us to have a quick look at something from the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 6:4-6

'Listen, people of Israel! The LORD our God is the only LORD. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength. Always remember these commands I give you today.'

A quick thing about that passage so it makes slightly more sense.

You'll notice that in your bibles, in the Old Testament there's often 'LORD' with capital letters. This is because it references the word that God uses to say who He is when talking to Moses.

If you don't know the original story (it's in Exodus) the Israelites are being kept as slaves by the Egyptians and God has a plan to get them out of slavery, so appoints Moses to the task, appearing before Moses in a burning bush.

God tells Moses (who objects a little bit to this task) to go to Pharaoh (who's in charge of Egypt) and ask him to let the Israelites go and Moses says to God 'Well, who should I say has sent me?' and God replies by saying 'I am who I am. Tell them 'I Am' sent me to you", and that's also where we get this word Yahweh from, it comes from the Hebrew characters that end up in our bibles as 'I am' and so LORD in capitals refers back to this moment and God telling us who He is.

Now this passage that we've read is incredibly important in the Jewish faith and so would be been hugely important to Jesus too and it's known as something called the 'Shema' and this, is essentially basis of the Jewish faith.

It's used for morning and evening prayers and traditionally parents say it to their children as the last thing they say before the kids go to sleep at night and so this passage 'Hear, O Israel: the LORD is our God and the LORD is one' will be one of the first passages people know.

But it's also hugely significant.

If you read through the Old Testament it won't take you long to find a reference to multiple 'gods' and it's something that, as a young person I didn't really understand...I thought it was something a little bit odd to see in the bible because in my head there was only one God.

But actually the people of the time were incredibly superstitious and had all sorts of gods and gods for all sorts of different things. They would have believed in a god of the fields, a god of the trees, a god of the rain, a god of politics, a god of family and all sorts of things.

And this meant that they were always on a mission to please these gods. If there wasn't enough rain they needed to make a sacrifice, if they had a bad year with their crops they needed to make a sacrifice...there were different gods for all aspects of life and they had to make sure they didn't hack them off.

So the Israelites hear 'Listen, people of Israel. The Lord our God is the only LORD. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.' and it's God saying to

them 'look, there's all this talk of gods being in charge of your crops, trees, rain, relationships and all this other stuff but actually it's just me.

I am the one God and you should love me with all your heart, soul and strength. Forget these other gods because they're not real!

And so it's a bit of a shift in thinking. It's shifting thoughts from there being lots of different gods to there being one God to who people should refer to as Lord'. One God who people focus their attention on not hundreds!

So essentially when we call God 'Lord' in our songs or in our words in church we are saying that he is our only master, we saying that we want Him to have that number 1 slot in our lives....we acknowledge that we serve God and God only

And In God asking asking us to acknowledge that He is God he requires total obedience. He requires us to make Him God of everything in our lives...not just the spiritual side but in everything.

All of our life is sacred when it's placed in a relationship with God.

[PAUSE]

Video Clip - Friends Season 3 Episode 2 - 'Drinking The Fat' - *They're meant to be getting ready to go to a museum do with Ross but no-one gets ready in time.*

I wonder what length you would go to to show your commitment to something?

I wonder what length your commitment goes to when it comes to God?

If we dive forward to the New Testament. In Mark 10: 17-23 we read:

'As Jesus started to leave, a man ran to him and fell on his knees before Jesus. The man asked, "Good teacher, what must I do to have life forever?"

Jesus answered, "Why do you call me good? Only God is good. You know the commands: 'You must not murder anyone. You must not be guilty of adultery. You must not steal. You must not tell lies about your neighbour. You must not cheat. Honour your father and mother.'"

The man said, "Teacher, I have obeyed all these things since I was a boy."

Jesus, looking at the man, loved him and said, "There is one more thing you need to do. Go and sell everything you have, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me."

He was very sad to hear Jesus say this, and he left sorrowfully, because he was rich. Then Jesus looked at his followers and said, "How hard it will be for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

[PAUSE]

Jesus says the same thing to the rich man as he said to his disciples. He says 'Come, follow me' asking him to give up everything and commit his life to becoming like Jesus. The difference is that this man goes away, & the bible says that he is unable to do that because he is rich.

And he isn't unable to do this because he has lots of money but because that money is important to him...more important to him than God.

It's a bit like Ross having to make the decision as to whether he was committed enough to Rachel to drink the fat...and likewise the story about the rich young man isn't Jesus saying 'give up all your money', it's Jesus wanting the man to be willing too and the man realising that Jesus is more important than all his money.

[PAUSE]

So for us today when Jesus asks us to follow him we have to consider whether we're going to be like the disciples and choose to make the main focus of our lives Jesus or if putting our relationship with Jesus above everything else is something we can't commit to. (Are we willing to drink the fat?)

The prayer we say when we respond to Jesus asking us to follow Him is just the start, we then have to see if like the rich young man there are things in our life that are more important to us than God.

In the Old Testament they had all these gods and **our** God comes along and tells the Israelites '*The LORD your God is the only LORD. [and to] Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength.*'

And that seems in a sense miles away from where we are now but actually I don't think it's that different because we might not refer to different things as gods but actually like the rich young man it's easy for us to put things above God, it's easy for us to say to God that we want Him in the spiritual part of our life but not the rest of it.

[PAUSE]

We live in this world where we're told that we need stuff.
We have a culture where celebrities are our gods....

One of the aims of HCYT which I work for is 'to be a positive Christian influence in school' (because there's only 1 local secondary) and so I was in a RE lesson a few weeks back just helping out and being part of the school environment and the lesson I was in was being covered by a different teacher to usual and as he was explaining something to the class he used the phrase 'One Direction' just in a normal sentence...and I'm not exaggerating but upon hearing that phrase one of the girls in the class let out a fairly loud, uncontrollable squeal because, without meaning to the teacher had just mentioned her favourite pop group.

The celebrity culture that we live in leads to people becoming obsessed both wanting to be famous and also idolising the celebrities we have in our culture...liking groups like 'One Direction' in a way that goes far beyond just liking their music and becomes something that is always on your mind.

And it even go beyond just liking something!

As I get older I find that there are more words that young people like yourselves use that I don't understand and so very occasionally I have to go home and look up a word on Urban Dictionary...a website that defines modern words that you may not find in the dictionary...their tagline by their search box reads 'look up anything, like bootylicious' (which I didn't look up!).

The first word I had to look up was 'hipster' which I think I now vaguely understand....the second...which ties into our theme was 'shipping'.

Now does anyone here know what that means?

According to Urban Dictionary 'shipping' comes from the 'ship' at the end of the word relationship and is 'most often used on tumblr by fandoms. Fandoms will ship everything and anything. Basically it's when you want a fictional character, real-life person or cartoon people to be together. People often write fanfictions about their favourite ship'.

In looking that up I also ended up looking up 'fandoms'!

So we live in this world where some people take their love for particular celebrities beyond liking what they do, whether it's books or music or films,

beyond buying all their stuff and always thinking about them

and they get to the point where they start to create alternative realities where perhaps their two favourite celebrities or characters....let's say Harry Styles and Hermione Grainger hook up!...it's very bizarre.

On top of that when we're not surrounded by celebrities our culture always tells us that we need more 'stuff'.

I'm a bit of a fan of Apple (as you may have guessed) and I think they make really good products but they play a lot of this idea that you need the latest thing. I've been sad enough in the past to sit down and tune into product launches as they're taking place and before he died Steve Jobs, head of Apple used to make a huge thing of these launches. They would almost be a performance with an air of mystery around it...people never knew what Apple would announce.

But all of these product launches followed the same pattern. They followed this pattern of Steve standing on stage and explaining how good the last iPhone was and how many people had purchased it followed by a 'but...it wasn't really that good because the new one can do this, that and the other...therefore you need the new one...oh and it's 3 grams lighter so you'll notice a huge difference in how you use it'.

Apple and pretty much everyone who makes something or puts together a TV ad plays on our desire for more stuff....because we're obsessed with stuff.

And so imagine Jesus says to you 'Come, follow me. I want to be the number one priority in your life.' and you say 'yeah I can do that' and then Jesus says 'But I want you to give up One Direction...or your iPod touch...or your Facebook account'.

What do you say at that point? Can you? Would you be willing to give that up for Jesus? Are there things in your life that if Jesus said to give up you know your heart would sink?

The early Christians who were around just after Jesus got themselves in lots of trouble...not because they did anything wrong in God's eyes but because they were totally, unashamedly committed to following Jesus and Jesus 'being Lord'.

And the problem they had with saying 'Jesus is Lord' was that whilst the gods of trees and relationships and cats they had in the Old Testament were gone the Roman's believed that whoever was their emperor wasn't just a man but a physical manifestation of a god.

The Romans were happy with other faiths as long as those faiths acknowledged that their emperor was the top dog but when Christians started saying 'Jesus is Lord' not 'Caesar is Lord' they objected...and this led to lots of persecution of Christians because they were saying that Jesus was more important.

They were saying that Jesus was the sole person they served.

When we say Jesus is Lord it's not about something we say on a Sunday or when we do our evening or morning prayers or when we're worried about the exam we're about to sit.

It's about saying that Jesus is Lord in all of our life....being a disciple of Jesus isn't a part-time thing. Much like the X-Factor journey we began thinking about last night it's something that requires total dedication and commitment.

God doesn't just care about our prayer life. He cares about our entire life and wants to be part of it. He wants to be the centre of everything we do.

That verse from Deuteronomy which Jesus also repeats when He is asked about the most important command says we should love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, minds & strength.

Jesus wants to be part of our entire lives. He wants to journey with us just like the disciples journey with Him. In the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 4:28 Moses tells the people that they 'will worship gods made by people, gods made of wood and stone, that cannot see, hear, eat or smell. But even there [they] can look for the Lord [their] God, and [they] will find him if [they] look for him with [their] whole being'.

God wants to be part of our whole lives. God wants us to call Him Lord of our entire lives.