

FAITH ASKING QUESTIONS



A ST FRANCIS COLLEGE SHORT COURSE

THE TRANSCRIPT

Episode 1 Religion and why it makes a difference

1.5 What's appealing to you about the Christian story?

Phillip Aspinall: I think the most appealing thing about the Christian story is Jesus. If you're thinking about what a good human life looks like, you can't go past Jesus really. I mean, he comes through the gospels and through the scriptures as an amazingly attractive person who isn't always easy to get on with. He calls out bad behaviour, he seems to be a bit pig headed at times. Towards the end of his life when he's heading to Jerusalem and his friends don't really want him to go there, he insists on going. But overall when people met Jesus, they had amazing experiences of their lives being turned upside down, of being transformed, of being set free...of things that were binding them and oppressing them, weighing them down...being released from all of that. He's an amazingly attractive person and he says to us that God is like this. If you've seen me you've seen the father. So, if God is like Jesus, that's a fantastic thing.

Ceri Wynne: That's easy, the incarnation! What can I say? That's just amazing! That God was with us on earth - that God walked with us - that in Jesus we have the perfection of God and human combined. A human person who bore the perfect imprint of God. And beyond that, that God has actually experienced everything we experience. The pain, suffering, joy, friendship, love, all the experiences that make a human life what it is. And that showed unceasing love towards even those that hated and reviled him. And I also take great delight in the stories of the resurrection and the appearance of the nails in the resurrected image of Jesus. Because to me that says, whatever happens in our afterlife, we bear the imprint of how we've lived and what we've been subjected to. I like the term that "matter matters" ...that our physical lives, that what we do here does matter and that we take that with us into whatever the resurrected life is all about. Definitely the incarnation, Emmanuel, Christ with us, Jesus with us, and the resurrection and the scars.

Josephine Inkpin: I was brought up in the Christian faith, so I think a lot of it has to do with relationships. That's the big thing about God and faith - that it's ultimately about relationships, so that's how I've learnt relationships. There are beautiful things in other faiths, but I think there's something powerful in the Christian



idea of love. I know that sometimes we make a bit of a mess of it. And people emphasise other things, but that's the core business isn't it, and mercy and forgiveness which are very strong in that. They are part of other traditions, and obviously part of the Jewish faith, but it's focussed in a person, and I guess that's an attractive thing. I've heard Jewish Rabbis say that's part of our gift as Christians, our God is embodied in a person...fortunately not a person we have a picture of so we don't have to pin God down to male, black or white or anything like that, it's actually a very enlarged picture...but a picture of God that is actually attractive.

It's not a powerful God. The God who speaks through Jesus is compassionate and gets alongside people and is comfortable in their own skin as well. Those are the things we are actually seeking in our own life. Those are the things I like to see, so it's taking forward...Jesus was a Judean, so he takes forward the Hebrew faith. He brings that out, and through the Christian story, it's made available to people throughout the world in different ways.

That for me is an exciting thing. Christianity is not a fixed thing - there are continuities and key elements of it, but it's actually something we are called in to deeper relationship with, and to build new relationships with other people that we come into contact with and new ideas and that sort of thing. It's an open thing, a generous tradition at its best and centred on love in the person of Christ and that to me is a really beautiful thing to give thanks for.

Peter Kline: I think what's most appealing about the Christian story is that it's a way of saying that where you find an opening to God or where you find an opening to infinite mystery is in the most every day and difficult aspects of life. I think this is what Christianity essentially means by the incarnation of God in Jesus. God comes to us; God opens to us in and through the uncertain fleshy stuff of existence. I think that's ultimately what Christianity is about. That access to God happens here, it happens in the most difficult and the most painful aspects of life, and that there's no dimension of existence, no matter how painful, no matter how uncertain, no matter how tragic - that God is not present too. That is what's most compelling about the Christian story. You find God right in the midst of tragedy, terror and horror. Which is what Christianity proclaims, that you find God in the crucified Christ - you find God there in the life of this person who was executed by empire, executed by power for challenging all kinds of ways the world has been carved up into good and evil. God is found there in that life that the world put to death...therefore God is found in all of life's uncertainty, even tragedy.

Gillian Moses: For me the Christian story at its heart is about relationships. I keep coming back to that word. It's our relationship with God, with one another and with the world around us. What the Christian story says is we are all ok, we can do this, we're loveable we are capable of loving one another and we are held in love by God, so don't worry so much about things, just concentrate on the business of getting along with one



another, of looking at other people and other parts of the world as blessed and proceed from there. Instead of worrying about who is right and wrong and who is in charge and do I have to have a say about everything?

My understanding of the Christian story is that it says “No, you don't have to worry about any of that...just be in love, love everything, and want what's best for us all, look for what helps us flourish and you're on the right track”. What's not to like about that message? I haven't found anything else that works as well for me and the way I relate to other people, as that, so I'm not in a hurry to let go of that one.

You can find the video of this session, along with reflection questions for individuals or groups at www.stfran.qld.edu.au under “SFC Short Courses—Faith Asking Questions”.

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