



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Sunday, 23 January 2022 – Epiphany3
Readings: 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31 & St Luke 4: 14-21
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Learning to make connections

When you were a child, did you have a kaleidoscope? Do you recall that when first looking down the viewing hole all one saw was a jumble of glass bits in a heap at the bottom of the tube? BUT, turn the casing and a multi-faceted, multi-coloured pattern emerged. And, if you kept turning more variations became visible. What does this have to do with today's readings? Well, as I stated in the welcome to this service Jesus and Paul continue trying to expand the boundaries of peoples' minds, to help them make connections in matters of faith.

We re all equal in God's sight

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he amplifies on the multi-faceted gifts members of the Body of Christ receive from the Holy Spirit: apostles, prophets, teachers, healers, leaders and, the list goes on. Paul reminds us that we are not all endowed with the whole gift-set only working together, as the Body of Christ, is that achieved. Effectively, the kaleidoscope of gifts merges in us to display the whole picture. "But", Paul says, "strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way" "What does Paul mean by that cryptic remark? It's explained in the next chapter, which is Paul's beautiful exposition on love, often read at weddings. He closes his comments with "Faith, hope and love abide, but the greatest of these is love". To draw the chapters together and to illustrate the point that Paul is making, say I flattered myself that I'm endowed with the gift of oratory and that I considered my gift better than the gift of hospitality or, leadership or, whatever gift is yours, then I'd be deluding myself. Each of our gifts of the Spirit are equal in God's sight, after all, he gave them to us. The more excellent way of which Paul speaks, is to do all things with love. How I wish Terry wasn't in Tanzania this morning because, after my sermon two weeks ago, when I closed with "What word in action means 'Holy Spirit' to you?", after the service Terry said "It's love!" Love personified is Jesus. Now, let's focus on what's going on in the Gospel.

Understanding the chain of events

Again, like a kaleidoscope, to make the pattern of Jesus' ministry come into focus, we need to turn to the chapters before and after. In four chapters Luke has galloped us through the announcement of, and the birth of Jesus; his visit, at 12 years old, to the temple; John the Baptist foretelling Jesus' ministry; his appearance at the Jordan to be baptised by John; and, today, having returned from 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness being tempted by the

Devil, Jesus attends the synagogue. What's the link that joins the pattern together? It's scripture! Jesus' birth was foretold in scripture. His visit to the temple when 12 years old was the place to learn about himself. No wonder he said to his parents when they eventually found him, "Didn't you realise I had to be about my Father's business?" In the wilderness he resisted all temptation and was victorious over the devil by quoting scripture authoritatively. And, today, he goes to the synagogue: where else would he go? It's the place of scriptural interpretation. Jesus like John before him interprets Isaiah. There are, however, two significant differences between John's interpretation of Isaiah and that of Jesus. John delivered fire and brimstone sermons about future events. Jesus with loving-kindness speaks in the present tense, because, love personified had arrived. To confirm this, he simply says to the people, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Had we been in the synagogue we would have heard a pin drop! Initially, the people were receptive of Jesus' words, as he spoke with such authority but, as the chapter rolls on, it shows that the people are not discerning the right connections. They recall Jesus' humble, earthly background and they conclude that he has overreached his station in life. In their hope for the arrival of the Messiah their insight is frozen in past interpretation. It's as though they are staring at the shards of glass in the bottom of the kaleidoscope. They refuse to turn matters over in their minds to make the links, to see the pattern and know that scripture has indeed, been fulfilled.

What does this mean for us?

How do we summarise the application of these readings for ourselves today? There can be no living body without a head. Jesus is the head of the body and we are the individual body parts. We come to church because we follow a living faith in Christ. We have hope of eternal life. And, we know that the greatest gift is sharing Christ's love with all people.

So, our question to take away today is not, 'Do we share Christ's love but, how much'? Amen.