

17 January 2022

Sermon by Isaac De Jongh.

Themes: Signs of God's generosity; Gifts of the Spirit; God's glory revealed;

### **Who am I?**

Readings: Isaiah 62: 1-5; Psalm 36: 5-10; 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11 and John 2: 1-11.

When I joined the parish twenty plus years ago the invitation to minister was a calling and that you had to be serious when dedicating yourself to growing the kingdom of God in the vineyard of St. Augustine's Brixton. The Sunday services had less than twenty people and the priest would continually ask the people – **"Why are you afraid?"** trust in God. I joined at the start of lent and on the third Sunday the men was asked to make tea for the rest of the congregation. This was a sign I will never forget that set me on a part to experience **God's generosity, the gifts of his Spirit and to know God's glory revealed through Jesus Christ.**

The question I asked myself then – **Who am I?**

By the end of that year we had more than 100 people present for Sunday mass, had introduced weekday mass and were not only growing in numbers but also spiritually. We were asked - why are you afraid and reminded to trust in God. This was evident as we could identify with – who am I? We did not have a mission statement or a parish pray like the one we presently have and which I believe reflects the way we do ministry today. There was a need in this community of Brixton and this parish had to be part of that need. We purchased a house to start an outreach centre for people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS and to support the poor and destitute in Brixton. With God's generosity, the different gifts of the Spirit and God's glory revealed through Jesus Christ, we paid off the house within three years. This is because we were not afraid and trusted in God. Don't get me wrong, I want to help you experience the bigger picture and where you fit in – **in God's generosity, the gifts of his Spirit and to know God's glory revealed through Jesus Christ.** I want you to reflect for a moment and think were you fit in, your contribution in the God's ministry here in Brixton- than ask yourself – Who am I

With the arrival of the Covid pandemic the last two years have been desolate and a desert for all of us. Somehow we were infected and affected that changed our lives – we were hopeless. With the protocols and restrictions we were forced to do things differently and at times would doubt -not to be afraid and to trust in God. We were afraid and paranoid not knowing what to do. More people are hopeless, destitute, sick, hungry, unemployed, and homeless, families are forced apart, and they cannot cope. Our numbers in the amount of people that could attend Sunday mass have gone down. Most of the people are serving online and this seems to be the way things are moving. Don't be afraid – trust in God.

The numbers are not great but the church still is relevant and visible in this community – look at our parish prayer and what we have achieved by God's grace over the years - we should know it by heart and be inspired to building God's Kingdom here in Brixton. Ask yourself – **Who am I?**

## Isaiah 62: 1-5

In Isaiah (54:12) – God made extravagant promises to God's exiled people. God promised to build up the barren and forsaken city of Jerusalem with foundations of sapphires, ruby towers, gates and walls of precious jewels. God promised to bring the exiled people home and promised them the richest of feast (56:2). However, the reality the people returned to was far from glorious. The land seems to them like a desert.

Isaiah acts as intercessor and promises to stand on the city walls and break the silence day and night in order to make God remember. The prophet vows to keep talking and preaching until God does what God has promised to do, restore Jerusalem and make this holy mountain a crown of glory and a song of praise to God. No matter how long it seems to take or how hopeless we feel - God's promises are always fulfilled. Jesus promised that he will not leave us or forsake us – don't be afraid – trust in God.

## Psalm 36:

The psalmist begins with a lament concerning the ways of the wicked who plot and deceive (v 1-4) Out of this dark meditation shines forth the praise of God – under God's wing the innocent finds refuge from evil, and God is the source of their light.

The climax of the psalm occurs in the petition of verse 10 "Continue your steadfast love to those who know you and your salvation to the upright." The psalmist knows that God is the one source of life and abundance, feasting and delightful drink.

## 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11

Paul is correcting the church at Corinth in regards to spiritual matters. They had the presence of the Holy Spirit in them, and spiritual gifts were manifested among them, but they were immature. The church of Corinth was abusing their spiritual gifts. They thought they were better than everyone else. You can have gifts of the Holy Spirit and still be very immature. These verses have great spiritual application for us, because, in the same way, everyone today who receives Jesus Christ in their heart, has been gifted by the Holy Spirit as well. We need to be spiritually mature in regards to our gifts just as Paul instructs.

The Lord is having a tough time getting His people to understand true spiritual maturity. We all love Christ, love the truth– believe in Christ, we are saved, we are regenerate. Opening and accepting the spirit within us depends on our willingness and openness to be receptive to the gifts of the Spirit. But we still battle with pride. We only think of the Kingdom as power and position, and how we can abuse our gifts of the Spirit.

We want position, authority, power and wealth– we confuse God's people by claiming that we are in control of the gifts of the spirit.

We desperately need humility–and my friends, we need to consent to God's divine presence within us! We need to align our souls with God's spirit to enable the gifts of the spirit to bear fruits in our lives. Join me in praying for a humble heart.

Everything we do that's filled with the gifts of the Spirit does count for God's glory. Only when we surrender to love and consent to the presence of the spirit, do we allow the gifts

to manifest itself in us, than are we able to use our gifts to serve others in the church. Commit to faithfully serving and indicate what your **TIME**, your **TALENT** and your **RESOURCES** are, in building the Kingdom – **Who am I.**

The Gospel – John 2: 1-11

Jesus' first miracle at the wedding at Cana underlines the resemblance between the vows spouses make to each other and God's covenant with us. In return, His people were to obey the Commandments, which defines the people's relationship to God and to one another. In the bible God extended His love and care to all. And everyone has a relationship with God. Jesus, who became one of us, issued a new commandment, "that we love and serve one another as He did in offering His life for us". Paul likened this new relationship to the way spouses relate to one another. He explained how spouses were to love and serve each other.

In the Gospel, Jesus' presence at the wedding at Cana emphasizes both personal and communal nature of the new covenant and His turning water into wine so the celebration could continue demonstrates how the new covenant of service and forgiveness is a happy, joyful one.

As we truly serve others and slave for others, it puts Christ on display and gives us the perfect opportunity to share our experience - **in God's generosity, the gifts of his Spirit and to know God's glory revealed through Jesus Christ** – than the question we need to answer - **Who am I.** Your purpose on this planet is to let others know that God became a man to bear God's wrath for your sin, then rise from the dead to be unashamed. We were reminded that our purpose is calling others to repentance is what brings joy to Heaven and to our hearts

Only those who are willing to slave, to consider everyone to be your master, to humble yourself so you could wash the feet of the ungrateful and identify with those who are hopeless, destitute, sick, hungry, unemployed, homeless and families that are forced to be apart –only those will experience true greatness in God's eyes, and true joy in your heart. Do you see yourself as a slave, doing whatever Christ commands? Only the humble follow God's Word, no matter what. To be a servant, then a slave, requires a humble heart. And every humble heart will serve, even slave, for God's glory.

Christ alone can change your heart so that you want to obey. Christ alone transforms you so that you want to follow Christ. Christ alone causes a person to become obedient from the heart. And that means if you're a genuine believer you will follow Christ, obey Christ, become a servant, desire to slave, and imitate Christ. And true Christians know they can't do any of this on their own—we must depend on the Holy Spirit in order to serve and slave.

To be part of the ministry of all believers, we have the opportunity now to dedicate ourselves to his serves by offering ourselves to building the Kingdom of God here on earth. **Who am I.** The pandemic should not deter us from doing what is required to be of serves to God's people. It might be our desert time but do not be afraid – trust in God always. Amen.