

This sermon is part of a series entitled, 'what Jesus taught us'. Two weeks ago Hans began with a text. John 1:18

18 No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. (NIV)

Then Hans explored how Jefta's mission statement fits into what Jesus taught us. There is one sentence in the statement that I would like to explore in greater detail.

'Jefta is a church that seeks to receive, experience and communicate God's love, as taught by Jesus'

Let's look at a few verses from John 17—when Jesus prayed for all who would believe through the message of others before them.

20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me".

Jesus is praying for us! That we receive experience and communicate Gods love.
Three 'parts' to this part of the prayer:

Part 1. God is the One who loves and commits

Part 2. As we learn to trust God's commitment, we increasingly value what God values.

Part 3. we start to communicate Gods commitment to the world with our actions.

Part 1 God is the one who loves and commits:

God says to each of us: You are beloved and valuable. Defining 'valuable': when you value something, whatever it is, you are not indifferent. If it's missing you'll search relentlessly. If something blocks your way, you'll find a way! God is love. He overcomes obstacles, doesn't stop until he gets what he values. He loves the people he created. He is committed so that they will have (eternal) life. When our ability to trust him got damaged, we became fearful and full of judgment. God did not copy our condemnation and fear. NO. God moved to overcome it—in order to save us. What God values, makes him move.

What does this say about us, made in His image? Since we reflect our Creator, love shows up in us: that's good news! Even at a very basic level, what we find valuable will inspire us to take action. Let's start with an example.

Consider your cell phone. If you're washing your dishes and the phone falls into the water, you'll immediately plunge your arm into the greasy water to rescue it. Now, that's just a phone. Imagine what you would do to save your child. He calls us His beloved children! God showed his love by sending His Son to rescue us. Jesus introduced God to us as our heavenly FATHER WHO LOVES US. A loving parent is the strongest image we have of commitment.

God has designed us with the potential to value and to love deeply. And the word potential indicates the freedom God builds into love. Love is a choice to value rather than to condemn. God chooses to

love, chooses to value, chooses to commit. And he encourages **us** to also be moved by love. To choose value over judgement and condemnation.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:17)

Have you noticed that when we're moved by love, we are energized to do all kinds of things? Each of us is unique, pursuing love *even when things in our own lives are difficult*— some fight for justice, some create corners of beauty, some persistently support and encourage, some provide practical help. At our best, we reflect our creator by making commitments to protect or enhance the wellbeing of the beautiful world God loves. Love God, love people.

But unlike God, our ability to love is limited. That's why we need to stay connected with God. Additionally, most of the things we pursue are limited in scope. That's all right—as limited people we can only reflect some facets of God's boundless creativity. This diversity helps us to rely on each other. Everyone is called to reflect a different aspect of God's love. Therefore we should not insist that others feel as strongly as we do about the particular things that we love. Let's celebrate the incredible diversity of his love.

Part 2 As we learn to trust God's commitment, we increasingly value what God values.

Mark 3:14: He appointed 12, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.

1. **Peter: accepted by Jesus, receives healing from fear and learns to trust.**

In the sermon last week, Johan told the powerful story of Peter. When Jesus calls Peter, he appeals to his values with these words: 'Don't be afraid. From now on you will fish for people.' Jesus sees that Peter wants to make an impact, to be an influencer. But Peter needs to overcome his fear of not being enough. And so Jesus begins to heal Peter by showing that he is safe, that he can trust Jesus. The shepherd gathers him safely in – so that he can really be himself.

2. **Nathanael: accepted by Jesus, discovers balance and learns to commit.**

In John 1, Jesus has just asked Philip to follow him. Philip has run off to his friend Nathanael, to invite him to come meet the Messiah. Nathanael responds with this from verse 45:

'Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?' 'Come and see' said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, 'Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.' 'How do you know me?' Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, 'I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Then Nathanael declared, 'rabbi, you are the Son of God; the king of Israel.'

Nathanael comes to meet Jesus with the sceptical and rather prideful eye of the scientist. Notice how Jesus uniquely honours Nathanael and meets him 'where he's at'. Jesus doesn't judge Nathanael for his judgemental attitude towards Nazareth. No, he honours Nathanael's value as a scientist— namely his love for evidence. God knows what we value and uses it for our benefit. Nathanael needed evidence to be able to trust and value Jesus, and through that, to get rid of his prejudices about the people of Nazareth. Jesus has brought balance back into Nathanael's love of truth.

Part 3. We start to communicate Gods commitment to the world with our actions

The imagery of a dance helps us see the actions that flow from commitment. Since we cannot sing, let's stand up a moment and see if you can learn three simple moves with us.

First movement: the 'God-invite'. God invites us to join him in His joyful dance of mercy, faith and commitment. That's the first and main movement. (Description for people reading at home: wide arms we welcome the hug God is offering us, and then wrap the hug around ourselves.)

The *second movement* you might call 'the Peter twist. This is when start to trust God's commitment to us. Then we can start to live according to our design. He said to Peter, 'pay attention, and I will teach you to fish for people'. He says to you and me, "pay attention, I want to heal your fear and help you do... 'whatever'.." remember that **Peter, accepted by Jesus, receives healing from fear and learns to trust.** (Description for people reading at home: It looks like grabbing a net from beside you and throwing it out in front of you. Arms raised you take the hug. Then fists in the air rejoicing: 'Yes!')

The *third movement* has to do with Nathanael. Nathanael had almost missed the Truth that he was seeking because of his prejudice against Nazareth! Nathanael allowed Jesus to transform his pride into humility. Then he is growing towards more love for God and people. This is a rebalancing of our values.. Recall we saw that **Nathanael, accepted by Jesus, discovers balance and learns to commit.** So we call the third movement the 'the Nathanael hop'. (Description for people reading at home: stand on one foot. Hop to standing strong on both feet. Praise God, accept his hug. It too ends in 'yes!')

The actions we saw today: learning to trust Jesus, who helps us let go of fear (Peter) and learning to commit with Jesus, who helps us rebalance whenever we need it (Nathanael).

The good news is that Jesus meets us as we are. When we choose to accept His value for us, we can start to value what he loves: the world he has created. His commitment to us can help us feel safe and humble enough to extend mercy to the world, instead of judging it. Then each of us— and as a church together— can choose to build more bridges. We can choose to value people who have different values than we have. This communicates God's love. So that the world may believe that God is a good Father—a Father who is so committed to His Entire creation that He sent his only begotten Son not to condemn but to save the world.

further reflection/Huisgroepen

1. think about why you might identify with Peter (*accepted by Jesus, receives healing from fear and learns to trust*) or with Nathanael (*accepted by Jesus, discovers balance and learns to commit*).
2. think about this part of the sermon:
'As limited people we can only reflect some facets of God's boundless creativity. This diversity helps us to rely on each other. Everyone is called to reflect a different aspect of God's love. Therefore we should not insist that others feel as strongly as we do about the particular things that we love. Let's celebrate the incredible diversity of his love.'

Q: What are the values *you especially* feel strongly about as a Jesus-follower?

Q: How can *our trust in God* help us bridge differences between us, as brothers and sisters?

Q: How can God help you build bridges with people who value different things?

3. Further reading: John 17