

JESUS COLLEGE OXFORD

JESUS WAS A NORTHERNER

Ezekiel 26:7-14
Matth 26:69-75
Psalm 107:1-9

Introduction

Welcome – The Revd Neil Short

2 reasons:-

- i) My Colleague Ed Down studied Chemistry here 2009 -2013,
- ii) As part of your sermon series, 'North, South, East and West I am your representative Northerner.

You will be pleased to hear I have left my flat cap and whippet back at home.

I am Vicar of St James in a City. 10 years ago, The Bishop of Liverpool asked my wife Margaret and I to launch a new church for students and young professionals in the city centre

We use the 1775 Grade II* Church of St James, which stood empty and vandalized for 40 years from 1972. There's no seating, heating, toilets or even a water supply.

In fact we have erected a marquee inside the Church for worship. As the congregation grows we extend the tent. If you are ever in Liverpool do come and visit us.

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As we all know there is an enormous difference between the North and The South.

Elizabeth Gaskell in her 1855 novel, North and South explores with her heroine Margaret the differences between her upbringing in the leafy south with that of life in the city of Manchester where she moves.

My own city of Liverpool was known as the second or third city of the empire.

But like much of the north, with the demise of the industrial age, poor labour relations in the 70's, riots in the 80's, unemployment has become a way of life for some families. Amazingly Liverpool had a population in excess of 1M in 1900, it now languishes at about 450,000.

Yes we had some great Northern Icons:-

- The Beatles
- Coronation Street
- Oasis
- Man U, Man C, and Liverpool.

...but these fail to pay the bills for those outside of work.

The Government talks about The Northern Power House but the reality is that the North continues to lag well behind the South in industrial and financial terms.

Educationally the gap is getting even wider.

Times Sat 21/10/17

Research by the children's commissioner found that a young person leaving school or college in London was 57% more likely to enter a top university than a school leaver in the North.

Sir Anthony Seldon, vice chancellor of Buckingham University, said that without the outreach work of Oxford and Cambridge in disadvantaged areas the picture would be even worse.

Of course I am overstating the case.

I love being a Northerner, I love living in the north and wouldn't swap it!

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What has the Bible got to say about the North?

There are several OT references to The North being a place of threat.

Both Assyrian and Babylonian armies came from the North, and so the North held its own dread.

Jesus of course was a Northerner, brought up in Nazareth near to Galilee.

It's clear from the New Testament, that there was a divide between those from the North and those from the South.

In John chapter 1 Philip tells Nathaniel that he has found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

Listen carefully to his answer in John 1v 46

Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?

(that is to say, from the North!)

And there's a telling verse tucked away in Matthews account of Peter's denial, Matt 26:73:

"After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said "Surely you are one of them, **for your accent gives you away**"

There was clearly a North-South divide.

It's interesting to note how North and South are worked out in Luke's two books.

- i) His gospel shows how Jesus travels from North to South to die in Jerusalem.
Yes it was you southerners who killed him!
Luke records that Jesus rose in Jerusalem but travelled back up North to eat breakfast with his disciples on the shore of Galilee in the North
- ii) His second book, The Acts of the Apostles, shows how the early Church moved North out of Jerusalem firstly to Antioch, which became the focal point for early church mission, and then onwards to Rome.

Oxford may be South of Liverpool, but we are both a long way North of Jerusalem, We are both the fruit of early churches mission to the North.

Let's look in more detail at North and South within the life of Jesus. Jesus ministry as recorded in the Synoptics can at its simplest be divided into two periods.

- i) - The Galilee phase:-
 - This is where Jesus spent 3 years doing his PHD...
 - This is where he did most of his **p**reaching
 - This is where he did most of his **h**ealing
 - This is where he did most of his casting out of **d**emons.
 - This is where he did most of his three years of ministry.
- i) He eventually has to travel South because he has to challenge the power base of the country.
Jerusalem in the South was the centre of Financial, Spiritual and Temporal Power.

Mark records that on 3 occasions Jesus announces that he must go south to Jerusalem.

There can be only one outcome... his death.

Three times he tells his disciples what is going to happen.

Listen to these words from the third prediction as recorded in Mark 10v32: "They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid."

They might not have fully grasped what was going to happen, but clearly they could sense that it wasn't going to end well.

All the power, influence and money resided in the South, and Jesus was going to challenge every power base which resided there.

There were only two possible outcomes.

- i) That the powers in the South (The church and the state) responded to his challenge and changed
- ii) Or ...more likely that feeling their power threatened, they remove the threat.

It's a familiar story woven into the very fabric of history.

It's not a battle between North and South, it's a simple battle between the HAVES and the HAVE NOTS.

The Bible records that Jesus gave up all that he had, he emptied himselfhe humbled himself.....he became obedient to death.....even death on the cross.

It's a challenge that all of you will face in your life. Will you use your time and talents to try rise to the top of the HAVES, or will you speak up for truth and justice, which will frequently put you in the firing line.

The Biblical record is clear: If you have Money and/or Influence you should use to speak up for those who have no money or influence, those at the bottom of the pile.

It was never an easy gig, many of the OT prophets were outlawed, and Jesus ended on a cross.

Justice was always a dangerous occupation.

Where we are born, North, South, East or West clearly has an enormous influence on who we are. The question for each one of us is not where we are from, but where are we going.

Winston Churchill said:

“We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.”

Jesus makes the challenge even clearer:

“Take up your cross and follow me.”