Bible Study 2 Corinthians 4 – St. Margaret’s Church Angmering

**Introduction**

Two great themes transect this passage. The first is light and darkness and the second is death and life. Central verses that pick up these two themes are 6 and 11. The second is very much more difficult to understand than the first. The 2nd the death-life theme seems to be along the lines that so often Christians will suffer many things (death related as in verses 8-10) in order to bring life to others. There is a likelihood that as we proclaim God’s word we shall encounter opposition, resistance, persecution but in so doing life will be brought to others through our ministry.

I very much doubt whether you will be able to cover the whole chapter in any depth. I found in my sermon on Sunday it was only possible to cover the first 7 verses in any acceptable depth. It’s better to cover a little really well than to skate over everything superficially.

**Verses 1 – 6: Light and Darkness**

1. Paul, the indefatigable apostle, expresses in v.1 the possibility of losing heart. In what ways can we as servants of Jesus lose heart? What is ‘ministry’ and what are the elements of it that could lead us to lose heart?
2. Verse 2 is probably written in reaction to false teachers. It contains 4 negatives and one positive. Can you give an example for each one?
3. The end of the previous chapter may provide a little help with the idea of something glorious being veiled. What is a veil? What’s its normal purpose? How is it used in verse 3? Why does the word ‘Perishing’ add a sense of seriousness to what we are reading?
4. In your experience in what ways have you found verse 4 to be true?
5. Verse 5 gives us an indication of what can break through Satan’s attempted concealment. What is meant by ‘Christ as Lord’? In what sense is Jesus ‘Lord’ and how would that be reflected in the content of our teaching?
6. If an unbeliever were to say to you that there was war in Europe, political instability in Britain, financial crisis everywhere so how can Jesus be Lord? What would your response be?
7. In the metaphor of ‘light and darkness’ which we see especially in verse 6 what does the light represent? What is the purpose of the light? What is the significance of the reference to creation?

**Verses 7 – 12 Death and Life**

1. The image of a jar of clay containing treasure has proven to be a very powerful one for Christians. In what ways are we like a jar of clay? What’s the treasure within?
2. Verses 8 & 9 contain 4 examples of Paul’s hardships but also alongside each one an important ‘but’. So, for example Paul has been hard pressed but not crushed. Can anyone in the group give a real-life example of how God sustains us when we are under pressure?
3. For the Christian who only wants to witness from the comfort of an armchair what does Paul have to say?

**Verses 13 – 18 Speaking with conviction and hope to the glory of God.**

1. The quotation in verse 13 comes from the Septuagint, an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament widely used in New Testament times, which to us, is not easily seen from the English Translation of the Hebrew text we use. (Ps 116v10) However the sense of it is that we speak because God has put a fire within our heart, which is the inner conviction of Christian truth. What is the difference between speaking only from your head rather than from your heart as well?
2. What is the life transforming truth contained in v.14?
3. In verse 16 we return to the theme of not losing heart. What does the ‘inner renewal’ referred to mean in practice? How might it put a brake on in order to stop us from losing heart?
4. What is the framework for hope we read about in verses 17 and 18?

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