Reflection for 22nd Jan. 3rd Epiphany – Discipleship

I came across a quote which summarises the theme of discipleship in the Gospel, ‘isn’t our existence a strange bargain; life owes us little, we owe it everything. The only true happiness comes from squandering ourselves for a purpose.’ This is the message of the epistle today, ‘be united in the same mind and the same purpose.’ The Gospel says, ‘they left their nets at once.’

What was it that inspired them to leave everything they knew and held dear? Religious history has had many movements and cult leaders; how was Jesus different?

The extraordinary difference is grasped by Paul in the epistle today, ‘the message of the cross is the power of God.’

The first description we have for the early Christians in Acts of the Apostles is ‘followers of the way! What way is this? It is the way of Love that implies they were ‘united in the same mind and purpose.’

The primary Christian Symbol is the cross, it represents the message of the Gospel and that is to imitate Christ; to go where he went; to follow in his path. A path that led to cross. Why did his path have to lead to a cross? Was it inevitable the pattern of his life lead to suffering? The religious leaders of his time, not only did not mention the name of God, but could not accept Jesus saying that he himself was God. He was crucified because he claimed to be God.

That is called blasphemy. We in our turn don’t claim to be God, so how is the way of the Cross inevitable for ‘followers of the way?’ Those who follow the way of love will come into conflict with those who expect us to compromise; what has happened to the core Christian principle of non-violence?

As Christians we need to be clear on our common purpose and that involves what kind of society/community we strive to build or create; throughout the centuries and generations Christians find themselves at the grass roots of society; providing all the social services and social reforms, including education for the masses. Today the big issues involve poverty and in justice; ‘homeless Sunday’ I am going to go out on a limb and claim that church is the only place left where you can go, where anybody can go into and be equal with everyone else, without distinction. In all other groups and clubs you sign up to rules and regulations and pay fees. Walk into any church of England this morning, you can sit on the same level with everyone else, no seats reserved and be treated equally as everyone else, without question. It is our best kept secret we strive to be a place where everybody belongs; all sectors of society being together without distinction in secular society you may well hold a host of titles and job descriptions but in church there is only one practice and that is the way of the cross, to bend the knee at the name of Jesus. Christianity is as always – the imitation of Christ.