If you have been here regularly over the last few months you’ll know that we’ve been thinking about what a disciple of Jesus is and how we might go about the task of making more disciples. You’ll also recognise this picture

We’re currently working on how to establish new Christians in their faith. There is a real sense in which that’s what John was trying to do by sending his disciples to see Jesus. There are two main ways to understand what is going on here. The first suggests that John, never having been part of Jesus’ ministry, is now having doubts about whether Jesus really is the Messiah. After all, Matt 3:11-12*“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you withthe Holy Spirit and fire.****12****His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”*

John was all about judgement and expected that Jesus would do the same – hence the reference to the winnowing fork and burning chaff! Of course, judgement is still to come, Jesus is quite clear about that, but that was not the focus of his earthly ministry. So, the argument is that John is having doubts and, believing that he is likely to die, needs to know if Jesus really is Messiah.

The second option is that John, knowing he was likely to die, wants his followers to know that Jesus is the one they should be following. In other gospels we’re told that Jesus performed many miracles in the presence of the two who had come from John, before sending them back.

Both are possible and you’ll need to make up your own mind. I tend toward the first one and I sense a little bit of desperation in John. Many of you know that I was away at a prayer school recently and one of the things the Korean pastors had noticed is that many churches in the UK lack a sense of desperation to know Jesus.

John was the last Old Testament prophet and was the ordained forerunner of the Saviour.

John shook people up. He announced the coming of the kingdom of God and he was unorthodox in his methods. There were extraordinary circumstances in his birth, he dressed differently and ate locusts and honey.

We know that when John was to be born he was to great in the Lord’s eyes, filled with the Spirit, have the spirit and power of Elijah and would prepare the way for Messiah. He attracted thousands of people by his message. It was a message that challenged the ritualism and legalism of the religious establishment.

He fearlessly preached about faith and righteous standards. He never compromised when it came to the truth of God.

Why was John the way he was? John was desperate for more of God. John knew who Jesus was but some around him were skeptical.

How does that relate to us today? There are too many people in our churches today who want to follow Jesus and yet they ignore the Bible and prayer. This means that when God starts to work some people are very sceptical and uncertain because they don’t really understand that it is God at work.

Knowledge of the Bible is at an all time low in the UK and US – even in churches. However, in other part of the world, like South Korea, the church is growing. Even in places like Iran and Iraq the church is growing – so why not here? I think it’s because we don’t have that sense of desperation to know God.

We need to turn ourselves back to God and invite the Holy Spirit to fill our lives! We sang earlier:

*How great the chasm that lay between us
How high the mountain I could not climb
In desperation, I turned to heaven
And spoke Your name into the night
Then through the darkness, Your loving-kindness
Tore through the shadows of my soul
The work is ﬁnished, the end is written
Jesus Christ, my living hope*

The first church that sprung up after Jesus death, resurrection and ascension into heaven was a vibrant church. It was a church that was desperate to know Christ and the power of His resurrection.

Their desperation turned into transformation. They became a church that was not ashamed of the Good News. They were not afraid to let God move. They did not care what others thought. They were not afraid of the change that was taking place.

God is in the business of transformation. He wants to see lives changed. He wants to see His creation saved, restored, set free, healed, and provided for.

We need this in the church today!

We need this in Prestwick!

We need this in this Church!

Desperation that turns into transformation.

At the risk of your reputation in this town or your neighbourhood, at the risk of people at your work or your school, or your friends calling you a Jesus freak we need to take our commitment to God through Jesus to higher levels.

What does that mean?

It means being more of what He wants us to be.

It means studying his Word more, praying more, worshipping more.

It means witnessing more.

It means loving more.

It means forgiving more.

It means reaching out from these walls more.

It means allowing the Holy Spirit full reign of your life.

It means being transformed by the renewing of your mind.

It means being in the world but not living according to the world’s standards but living according to the Word of God.

It means being desperate for more of God so we can be transformed because transformation is why God sent Jesus to the earth.

To be sure, we are living in desperate times and we need to be desperate people.

John wasn’t afraid to preach what he believed.

He wasn’t afraid to step on the toes of the religious.

He wasn’t afraid about being different then the norm.

He wasn’t afraid to give his life for his God.

Because John was the way he was many labelled him as weird, fanatical, irreverent, mad and wild.

We need to stop worrying about the labels people put on us as Christians and start living our lives with a desperation to be more like Christ so that we can experience His transformation.

We need to allow God to fully immerse each of us with His power. We need to go deep with God!

The Greek word for immerse is baptizo and it means to dip repeatedly, to submerge. I believe today the church needs a fresh baptism or immersion in the Holy Spirit. We need a new outpouring of the Spirit in our day

That same Holy Spirit that came to the believers in Acts 2 is still available to us today.

Ephesians 1:18-19 *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,****19****and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

Verse 19 continues: *That power is the same as the mighty strength****20****he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,****21****far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come*.

This week I urge you to pray that Holy Spirit would so enlighten your heart that you would experience his presence in a new way – that you would be filled with hope and anticipation and that you would experience his incomparably great power. Notice that Paul writes “his incomparably great power FOR US who believe”! If he can deal with sin and raise Jesus from the dead to his place in glory what difference can he make in our lives?

Philippians 3:10 *I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead*.

Philippians 3:13-14 *Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,****14****I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus*.

Straining – it takes effort on our part. Becoming like Jesus doesn’t just happen.

Do you know Jesus? Do you have that deep personal relationship with him that he offers? Does that relationship affect your decisions and behaviour? We don’t need to be the slightly odd character that John was – but we do need to be different to people who don’t know Jesus.

Are you desperate for Jesus?