

Notes on Ephesians 3 : 17b-19, Deuteronomy 6 : 4-9, Leviticus 9 : 15-18
'In Jesus, we're hooked on a feeling'

One of the standout parts of this year's World Cup is the Scottish fans. They have been a revelation to their American hosts by their love of bagpipes, kindness, enthusiasm for baseball, coning (putting traffic cones on statues) and drinking. You could say that they've been a real tonic of laughter and love and perhaps this is why America needed to host this year's finals? Our text for today, to parody a certain lager advert, could claim it is 'Probably the most famous text in the world', well probably not. But what this text does do for sure is to be one we can all lose ourselves into which is what our communion table invites us to do.

Our focus for today is vision, which is about us all seeing clearly and our all being hooked by it which was my response 13 years ago when I came here. I was captivated by the clarity of the role required of me, of the strategy of the church and the allure of our strapline. In all honesty I really tried not to come because I was sure Dronfield was far too north and I really urged the then leadership team to talk to other candidates but both they, and God, were very persistent!! Our communion table speaks of an even greater vision than that. It speaks of the nature of God's love for each one of us and our being invited to be shaped and filled by this love.

What is the core of Paul's vision for the Ephesian church, as expressed in verses 16 and 17? It is love. This vision is built on, inspired and motivated in verse 17 by a joint horticultural and architectural image. Firstly, he calls them to be rooted in Jesus so that they'd thrive like the famous cedars of Lebanon – in Psalm 92, verses 12 – 15, this massive tree is essentially like a house plant carefully grown in the Temple. Jesus here is like God's gardener who tends, nurtures and weeds round us that we may all grow higher and deeper. The second image is where our lives are built securely on Jesus who is the foundation. This is, once again, Temple imagery and this Temple is one which is far greater than Solomon's and more splendid than Herod's. This Temple is the place where God dwells in and among his people because their sins have been forgiven, the Messiah is ruling, the enemy has been defeated and the People of God have been purified. Both of these images find their home in new creation language.

This tree and Temple lens allows us to see the four-dimensional love of God. The idea of height and breadth refers to the dimensions of the cosmos where we can stand and count the stars in the sky or the sand on the shore as Abraham was invited to do. This impossible task is teach us just how limitless God's love is and what is our response to this love? It is

to stand in awe of this God, or in other words to worship him. We are to know God with our minds but we're also to know him with our hearts, which is his desire, because he made us to have a heart-to-heart encounter with him. When we do so we are filled with the fullness of God which is as intoxicating as your first love. This is where the language of Leviticus 9 and Deuteronomy 6 come into play as well as the heart wrenching words of Revelation 2 because this church had lost its first love.

This is Paul's vision for this Ephesian church. Let me ask you, is it yours for us as a church in Dronfield? I know that it is mine and I also know this vision needs a fresh pair of legs to enable us as a church to go longer and wider, to go higher and deeper than I can ever take it.

I can say with my hand on my heart that this week my life completely changed. For the first time in many years, I can hear clearly now and though everything is loud what I need to learn is how to adjust the settings on my phone – the joy of YouTube videos – that I may enjoy these aids even more. This is what today is all about, about us being helped to hear clearer from Jesus than ever before that we may say your will be done, not mine. This is my desire for all of us and may we all grow in Jesus' way that our love for him may flourish and grow, but that also many more will come and join us loving Jesus too.