Session 6 – following on from Sunday 13th February

Read Acts 24

What charges were brought against Paul and how does he defend himself against these charges? What does think the issue really is behind his persecution?

Why is the resurrection so important an issue? How did it challenge the Roman approach to religion? How did it challenge the Jewish leaders? How might it challenge today’s society?

As a Christian, belief in the resurrection is both a comfort and a challenge. What do you find most comforting? What do you find challenging?

Paul shares the good news of Jesus with Felix and his wife. It is about both righteousness (a restored relationship with God our creator) and the judgement to come (verse 25). Felix does not want to hear any more. Why might this be?

In what ways is it easy to speak of a judgment to come in today’s society, and in what ways is it hard? Why might this be? If it is easier to bring people to church without speaking about judgement, should we just skip mentioning it? Why should/shouldn’t we do this?

In Acts 25 (we’re not given much detail) Festus can’t really find anything to prosecute Paul with. The only thing he raises is that Paul thinks Jesus is alive. He offers to return Paul to Jerusalem. Paul insists on appealing to Caesar. Why would he do this? What was the motivation behind this? Acts 23:11 is certainly an influence, but when you look forward to Acts 26:32 it is right to ask could Paul have gone about it a different way?

Read Acts 26

In his “defence” Paul appeals to the Hebrew Scriptures as a justification for his faith (e.g Deuteronomy 18:18-19, Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 53:5-12). Is it still important today for Christians living in a gentile world to know and understand the Hebrew Scriptures? Why/Why not?

Festus wants to stop the proceedings because he thinks Paul is insane. What is the sticking point again?

Verse 28 is interesting. What does Agrippa think Paul is trying to do? Is he right? Look at 2 Corinthians 5; 11 to 14. Does this help us understand Paul’s approach?

Compare verses 26:12-18 with 2 Corinthians 4: 1-6. What are the themes and ideas in common? How does Paul’s experience on the Damascus road help him understand and explain the Good News of Jesus? How might our own experience of coming to faith in Jesus help us understand God’s purposes more clearly, and give strength to our sharing of the good news of Jesus?

When we look over these chapters, we see so many similarities with Jesus’ experience in Luke 23. What connections do you think Luke is wanting us to make? Why is this so important for us to think about?

Time and again, Paul asserts his innocence, and no reason is found to keep him in prison, yet in prison he stays, clearly in chains (26:29). How can we learn to have patience and perseverance like Paul did?

What do you think Paul was praying during this time. How does what we see here help us shape how we pray in difficult or challenging times?