

288 *A totally different paradigm*

Yes, OK I over-analyse things, but something changed when we moved churches over six years ago; life is different now, so why am I happier in my faith than I ever have been?

Everyone's faith is different, everyone's church is different; it's a continuum. So as I contrast the paradigm shift that I've experienced, I just offer these observations in case they might help you in your journey.

These are just bullet points (sometimes bordering on caricature, sorry) that reflect the issues I was unhappy about. You may want to argue against some of them, but maybe some will reflect uneasiness in your own faith, or your own church's teaching. If so, do argue with God about them – or with me!

(The two font colours are just so I can use note form and not waste words.)

God is holy, we're sinful, we're rejected/separated unless we believe in Jesus.

God is loving and accepting (*Our father*), but we're flawed; we can be rescued through Jesus' death.

We're off to heaven when we die, thankfully to escape the bad stuff we experience now.

It's about bringing heaven to earth now (*thy kingdom come*), and fully when Christ returns.

The essential thing is personal salvation – are you saved or are you not?

The essential thing is being community – you're included, we're all in this together.

It's all about the individual (me, my sin, my salvation, my relationship with God).

It's all about community (*our daily bread, our trespasses*).

Services are guilt-centric – OK, it's toned down from 'our manifold sins and wickedness ... provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation', but it's still there.

Services are love-centric, yet acknowledging the reality of evil.

Substitution: God's wrath falls on Jesus instead of us, so we live, 'as if we'd never sinned'.

On the cross Christ defeated the powers of evil and gave us power, through the Holy Spirit, to defeat our sin and that in the evil structures around us (*thy will be done on earth*).

Unbelieving spouses/friends/family?

They are doomed, so bring them to church to hear the gospel.

They are loved by God and are welcome to share our church – on their own terms.

e.g. 'You want your baby baptised?'

You first have to believe in Jesus and attend church – it's a service for believers only.

Here's what baptism means; these are the promises you'll make; is that OK with you?

Other religions are simply wrong and need converting.

Work with other faith communities to help '*thy kingdom come*' now.

Mission? Go to other people and places and tell them the truth of Jesus, maybe use aid as a platform for the gospel.

Mission? Serve people in your local community, or take your specialist skills to other communities (*give **us** this day **our** daily bread*).

Finally, as you've come to expect from me... gay relationships?

It's about the immutable sexual ethics clearly laid down in the Bible – sin and guilt.

It's about faithful relationships, serving one another, and together serving the community.

Paul Bev. 17.10.23