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9. APPENDIX 1 – QUESTIONNAIRE: PREACHING

Respondent number

V1

Answer all the questions by drawing a circle (O) around a number in a shaded box or by writing your answer in the shaded space provided

1. What is your age in completed years?

--

V2 5

2. What is your gender?

Male	1
Female	2

V3 8

3. What is your home language?

English	1
Afrikaans	2
Sotho	3
Zulu	4
French	5
Other (specify)	

V4 9

4. To which population group do you belong?

Asian	1
Black	2
Coloured	3
White	4
Other (specify)	

V5 11

5. How would you describe your relationship with this Church?

Member (officially applied)	1
Adherent (in regular attendance)	2
Visitor (occasional attendance)	3

V6 13

6. How long have you been a born again believer?

	Years		months
--	-------	--	--------

V7

--	--	--

 14

7. How long have you been a member of this Church?

	Years		months
--	-------	--	--------

V8

--	--	--

 17

8. Is the hearing of sermons a regular part of your life as a Christian?

Not at all	Seldom	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

V9

--

 20

9. What in your opinion determined the content of the sermon?
(choose one answer only)

The needs of the people	1
The Biblical text	2
The interests of the preacher	3
The thoughts of various commentators	4
Other (specify)	

V10

--	--

 21

10. What model of preaching do you prefer?

Expository (consecutive studies though the Bible)	1
Topical (current issues)	2
Narrative (story)	3

V11

--	--

 23

11. How would you describe the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon? (choose one answer only)

People were restless	1
A sense of holy awe	2
Light and enjoyable	3
Frivolous and irreverent	4
Other (specify)	

V12

--	--

 25

12. The sermon today...

		Not at all	A little	Much	Definitely		
01.	was too long	1	2	3	4	V13	27
02.	was very prescriptive	1	2	3	4	V14	28
03.	was full of advice	1	2	3	4	V15	29
04.	was an ordeal to endure	1	2	3	4	V16	30
05.	was filled with life application	1	2	3	4	V17	31
06.	was Biblical but lifeless	1	2	3	4	V18	32
07.	was very entertaining	1	2	3	4	V19	33
08.	was light on Biblical substance	1	2	3	4	V20	34
09.	clarified the Biblical text	1	2	3	4	V21	35
10.	Scripture was frequently quoted	1	2	3	4	V22	36
11.	mentioned God	1	2	3	4	V23	37
12.	exalted Jesus Christ	1	2	3	4	V24	38
13.	focused on the cross of Christ	1	2	3	4	V25	39
14.	was filled with weighty truths about God	1	2	3	4	V26	40
15.	promoted the supremacy of God	1	2	3	4	V27	41
16.	promoted the moral purity of God	1	2	3	4	V28	42
17.	promoted the mystery of God	1	2	3	4	V29	43
18.	promoted the presence of God	1	2	3	4	V30	44
19.	promoted the closeness of God	1	2	3	4	V31	45
20.	promoted the grace of God	1	2	3	4	V32	46
21.	promoted the pleasure of knowing God	1	2	3	4	V33	47

13. The focus of the sermon today was on
(Choose one answer only)

Human experience	1	V34			48
The Glory of God	2				
The life of the preacher	3				
Human needs	4				
Other (specify)					

14. As a result of listening to the sermon today

	Not at all	A little	Much	Definitely		
01. you are inspired to love God more	1	2	3	4	V35	<input type="text"/> 50
02. you are more determined to submit to the will of God	1	2	3	4	V36	<input type="text"/> 51
03. you have been made aware of a specific sin in your life	1	2	3	4	V37	<input type="text"/> 52
04. you are inspired to worship God	1	2	3	4	V38	<input type="text"/> 53
05. you are going to change something in your life	1	2	3	4	V39	<input type="text"/> 54
06. you were offended	1	2	3	4	V40	<input type="text"/> 55
07. you had a glimpse of the glory and majesty of God	1	2	3	4	V41	<input type="text"/> 56
08. you were made more aware of God	1	2	3	4	V42	<input type="text"/> 57
09. you felt your soul was nourished	1	2	3	4	V43	<input type="text"/> 58
10. you have heard about a great God	1	2	3	4	V44	<input type="text"/> 59
11. you heard God speaking to you	1	2	3	4	V45	<input type="text"/> 60
12. you sensed the preacher's dependence on the Holy Spirit	1	2	3	4	V46	<input type="text"/> 61
13. you sensed the preacher is in touch with God	1	2	3	4	V47	<input type="text"/> 62
14. you sensed the preacher's commitment to the glory of God	1	2	3	4	V48	<input type="text"/> 63
15. you have heard from a great communicator	1	2	3	4	V49	<input type="text"/> 64
16. you were delighted to receive something from God	1	2	3	4	V50	<input type="text"/> 65

15. Who did you experience to be the most dominant in the service today? (Choose one answer only)

The worship leader	1	V51	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	66
A musician	2				
The preacher	3				
God	4				
Other (specify)					

16. Do you believe that God is primarily concerned about himself?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

V52

68

Thank you so much for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. Your assistance in this is greatly appreciated

Charles De Kiewit

10. APPENDIX 2 – NARRATIVE SERMON: N1

Theme: Forgiveness

Introduction.

Would like to do it by way of telling a few stories.

One of the most telling times in my ministry. The story of forgiveness and regret – couple who turned to each other to seek forgiveness.(M & T)

On a personal level – as a young teenager – this is the way that I experienced forgiveness when Brain Human a colored man put his arms around me and told me that he loved me in the Lord. Here was a person who was so hurt by all that had happened and the color of my skin should have been an offense to him. I will never forget that morning when a person of a different skin color showed me the love of God.

There are other times, what do you say to a teenage girl at summer camp who tells you all that her step father had done to her, taking away her innocence. Forgiveness.....

Last year – my visit to the holocaust museum – Corrie Ten Boom. I was silent when I got to the bottom. I could never forgive.

1993 – St James the massacre

These are big moments. Moments of wonder and amazement. What brings individuals like these to this place of forgiveness.

- Forgiveness from the most deep and intimate
- Forgiveness to the level of petty

As you sit here this morning this topic is of relevance to each of us. Each one of us have needed to receive or to give forgiveness. For some of us it is just

too difficult. It is just too hard. Some of us cannot forgive ourselves. Some of us wish that that person or that group of people would just forgive but it seems as if this is just not going to be a possibility.

On google – 32 500 000 hits I think that this topic must then be reasonably popular.

We Christians just have another way of being;

What drives a man who has lost his wife in an attack like this to say over national TV we forgive you for what you have done? The kingdom that we have is not the kingdom of this world. There is a different set of rules that governs the way that we live our lives.

Jesus' disciples asked him how to pray – the story you will find in Matt 5 one of the lines of what we call the Lord's prayer

- forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What is this connection with forgiveness? What is this connection between forgiveness and our relationship with God? Why is it that God places such a high value on this one?

Matt 18 the story of a man who owed a king a lot of money and found grace – yet went out to demand from another what he owed.

Luke 6 forgive and you will be forgiven.

I think it is because of what forgiveness does to us.

It affects my capacity to relate to others.

- this can become a obsession.
- All that you talk about
- All that you think about

- How the other part is so wrong and that you are right in feeling the way that you do.

It affects our capacity to relate to God – there is a break

If you have something against your brother

Matt 5:23-24

23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

NIV

11. APPENDIX 3 – EXPOSITORY SERMON: E1

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

SUNDAY 13 August 2006

Matthew 13:1-23

Introduction

There is no farmer who doesn't know that farming is both a challenging, difficult work as well as richly rewarding

- Looks over virgin soil – sees opportunity
- Begins the work of cleaning the land, preparing the soil – so that planting can begin
- Faces many challenges, including pests, lack of rain
- But sense of great reward at harvest time when months of hard work and patient working pays off.

It is much the same when it comes to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God

- There are challenges, obstacles, disappointments
- But in the end there is always a harvest of righteousness gathered in.]

This is what the parable of the sower is all about

- Highlights responses of peoples hearts to ministry of the Word
- Not all is a positive response
- Reasons given to why this is so
- But there is always fruit in ministry

The parable is indicative of the response Jesus received to His ministry

- Many heard – not all believed

- Some did for a while – then fell over
- But some knew the mighty, powerful, transforming work of God in their hearts and became fruit bearing Christians – led to a harvest of praise with God!

Now why is this parable important for us today?

- Reminds us not to be discouraged and disillusioned by the preaching of the Word in a time when it is not popular
- Living in a day and age when people not interested in preaching of Word

2 Timothy 4:3-4

- The church and pastors are being tempted to abandon the preaching of the truth in order to appeal to the itching ears of people – prefer to be entertained than to submit themselves to God's Word. Therefore the culture is no longer impacted by the Word of God (if you think I am over exaggerating listen to David Wells, 'The bleeding of the evangelical church, p8')

What we have here in parable of sower is encouragement to persevere in preaching and teaching.

Now this is a marvellous parable

- One of seven parables in **Matthew 13** related to the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Theme of the Kingdom repeated (**vs 11, 19, 24, 31, 44, 45, 47**)

What is the Kingdom of Heaven all about?

Jewish concept – intervention of God to restore His people's fortunes and liberate them from the power of their enemies.

- Their great hope for the future yet John the Baptist preaches that “... *it is at hand*” (3v1) and Jesus in these parables dispels the idea that it would be a political emancipation
- Nothing to do with the defeat of the Roman army
- Rather it has to do with his Word reigning in people’s hearts
- His rule as their King would be by their submission to the Word in their heart
- Now Jesus was a great teacher
- Sermon on the Mount unparalleled in excellence
- Gave meaty sermons, rich in doctrinal content, illustration and application
- Here He employs another method of teaching – through more parables (13 v 3)

Why Parables?

Some might say “*it’s a good way – people like to hear stories*”

- But more to it than that!
- You see concealed within the story there was deep and spiritual and moral truth conveyed
- If you wanted to uncover that deep spiritual truth you needed to dig for it eg. Gold digger – unearth and dig deep, squirrel – gather nuts and then crack them open to get edible food
- So then was a dual purpose to a parable.

On one hand – it held rich reward for the earnest inquirer and seek after truth – the mystery of the Kingdom would be revealed.

On the other hand – to the careless, negligent and sceptic it would conceal the truth and further seal the willingly ignorant in unbelief (13 v11-13) i.e. Willingly refusing to believe will lead to further spiritual impoverishment and unbelief while earnestly desiring to know more will lead to further light and blessing.

That is the effect of Word of God – double edged sword – cutting like a surgeons scalpel in order to restore but also destroying in judgment upon those who refuse to hear.

Point : God's Word is not to be trifled with. A great responsibility is placed on the hearer to respond correctly.

- The fact that some do not respond well to the Word is not a reflection on the weakness and powerlessness of the Word but rather on the sinful, fallen nature of the human heart.
- Now Jesus encountered different responses to the Word He preached – tells a parable that illustrates their responses.
- Here He is in a boat just off the shore – large crowds before Him on shore – tells them a number of parables.
- He begins with the parable of the sower.

Story as follows:

Sower – wide, liberal scattering as work along path.

Seed fell in different places

- Some on path – birds ate
- Some in rocky places – soil shallow – scorches
- Some among thorns – choked plants
- Other good soil – well nourished – good

Designed to invoke a response, a request for further meaning – yet most shrugged shoulders – disciples however, sought the meaning and they were rewarded

As we look at parable – answer 3 questions

- Who is the sower?
- what is the seed?

- What kinds of soils are there?

1. Who is the Sower?

- In context Jesus is the sower – healing sick and teaching **(9:35)**
- Parable of weeds He identified Himself as the sower **(13:37)**
- Here he was as the sower once again scattering the seed of the Word
- What we see here is Jesus interpreting His own ministry
- Perhaps His disciples were concerned that His messianic Kingdom was not coming in with a blaze of glory – in fact some opposition already to Him **(12:24)**
- Here Jesus gives them a dose of realism – about the nature of His mission.

Gordon Keddie: *“His kingdom was coming with seeds, not swords, with thoughts, not trumpets; with changed lives, not conquered capitals”*

- The sower, farmer was Jesus
- But by implication the disciples themselves and everyone of God’s labourers of the Gospel, who declare the Word in truth are sowers too **(1 Corinthians 3:9)**

Therefore whether head of household, Sunday School teacher, H.G.F. leader, preacher, teach Word – sower.

2. What is the Seed?

Luke 8:11 – *“The Word of God”* – message *“message of the Kingdom”* – message that is gospel central i.e. Jesus Christ is presented as the King of grace and glory who delivers the sinner from captivity and reigns in their hearts through the truth.

Therefore, the seed is not just an aspect of the truth, teaching upon a particular subject, but the truth of God's Word related to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now this is important

- Some who teach from the Word of God – yet dry, academic, no life – why? Not Christo-centric, no pointer to the person of Jesus and when Jesus is not lifted up and magnified, the Spirit does not work in saving power.
- Some can talk endlessly about a certain point of doctrine eg. End times, Future of the Jews, the law but of little use to souls if Christ Jesus is not presented.
- Can teach children – stories of Bible – moral lessons – if not pointed to Christ – then missing the mark

The seed is the Word of God as it is related to gospel.

The whole of the Word from Genesis to Revelation is all about the gospel – the Kingdom of God

- About kingdom ruined by sin
- About kingdom pictured and promised in Old Testament e.g. sacrifices, Messianic prophecies
- About kingdom regained and restored through Jesus Christ
- About kingdom fully realised at return of Christ

If cannot point children, people to Christ in the Word then don't preach, teach at all!

That is what the seed is. The Word of God as it reveals the glory of Christ in the gospel (from Genesis to Revelation)

But now let us turn our attention to the main focus point of the parable – that is the different kind of soil in which the seed falls.

3. What are the Soils?

(a) *Soil in General*

The world, the human race

Specifically – the hearers of the gospel.

The Word must be scattered over the world

Problem – not all receive the Word

Have bad soil and good soil

- Bad Soil – 3 types
 - Path, rocky places, thorns
- Good Soil – farmers ploughed field

Purpose of Parable:

Highlights difference between believers and unbelievers as far as Word goes.

But also a challenge to believers to examine our hearts to see whether we are what we profess to be.

○ **Bad Soil Hearers (v19-23)**

Path (vs 4, 19)

Well trodden, hard – hearts hard

Do not understand, do not grasp – Word has no place in their hearts.

2 Reasons why this may be :-

Careless – in one ear out the other

Eg. attend Sunday School, church, hear gospel exhortations -
hardened to appeals

Cynical – purposefully harden their hearts

Sceptical, bitter or angry toward God

Criticise the Bible, criticise Christians, despise the gospel that is shared with them

To both careless and cynical – Word snatched away by evil one.

‘snatched’ – thief grabbing a handbag with precious belongings and running off – sudden swift, lost everything valuable.

So the Word which is precious and contains blessing to those who receive it is snatched away.

Note – activity of Satan when Word is preached.

Not hidden in a hole in ground

Looking to see which hearts are careless

Cynical and as quick as a flash – there to rob them of the truth

That is the first hearer – indifferent, careless, cynical.

The Rocky Places (vs 5, 20-21)

These are the superficial

Shows real appetite for a while

Sits under Word, in beginning excited, talks about it, even joy

Then heat gets turned up, hard times – there is trouble and persecution and they bail out! Not there anymore!

What was the problem?

Has no root

Know importance of roots – drink up water and nutrients.

These lives not embedded in Word

Felt nice for a while – no real staying power

The Thorny Soil (vs 7, 22)

Person is governed by materialistic goals and desires

Main interest is acquiring wealth, more concerned about his earthly retirement than his heavenly rest

Half-hearted, double-minded, divided interests

When he hears the Word – mind is not there – thinking about his worldly cares, his business, next deal, how to extract the debt owed to

himself etc.

Word finds no place in the heart full of the thorns of materialism.

Therefore the worries and cares of this life choke the seed of the Word
– no spiritual life and growth.

So these are the different kinds of responses to the Word as far as
negative responses go.

Those indifferent, superficial, worldly

Now all that might tend to be a bit discouraging, but it is meant to do
the opposite - to deliver us from unrealistic expectations and
discouragement when we see people come and hear the Word of God
and turn away.

So often we can take it personally – we must not!

This is what happened when Jesus taught

Will happen to every faithful preacher and teacher of Word, every
evangelist

But parable doesn't end there, does it?

Wonderful positive response to Word

- **Good Soil (vs 8, 23)**

Why is it good soil?

Ploughed, fertilized, prepared

Ready to receive the Word

Of course we know

Heart needs to be first prepared by the Holy Spirit before it can receive
the Word

It needs to be ploughed

So the heart needs to be prepared by the gracious moving of the Spirit

Such a person given 'an ear to hear' as he listens. Only because of
God's sovereign grace.

Such a person responds to the Word

Notice – not only hears – understands

Heartfelt response – action, obedience, fruit

What is producing the fruit?

The Word of God that is powerfully at work – it germinates in mind and heart, grows, changes and transforms the person.

Able to overcome sin, remove sinful thoughts and practices, character transformed, begins to put his gifts to work, bringing forth fruit.

Why? Power of the Word **Psalm 1**

Word rooted and growing – cannot be stopped, dynamic, powerful, not mechanical, but life of its own.

That is of tremendous encouragement. Preach the Word, Teach the Word, watch its power unleashed.

Many try to grow church in superficial manner e.g glitz and glamorous means – no real power. End up fighting for an organization rather than the truth.

Don't have to help the Word – like a lion – unleash it – watch it get to work devouring falsehood and liberating captive souls to sin.

You see this parable ought to give us great encouragement, great confidence in the ministry of the Word.

Conclusion with Application

Notice varied fruitfulness (**v 23b**)

- To encourage us to long to be more fruitful
- Make use of every opportunity to grow, attending services, reading, studying Word of God prayerfully and diligently

Urges is to

Examine hearts.

What kind of hearer am I? What kind of soil are you?

Am I careless when it comes to God's Word – switch off, allow the Word to go in one ear and out the other.

Is there some superficiality – give appearance of loving Word – no real impact in life i.t.c. hardship. Own desire carry you away – not rooted in God's truth.

Are you governed by worldly mindset – more concern about home, pension than about eternal well-being of soul?

What a reminder to bow before the Lord Jesus – say *“Sanctify me by your truth. Your Word is truth. Search my heart, remove all hindrances to the reception of your Word. Grant grace to receive Word, understand it and grow.”*

12. APPENDIX 4 – TOPICAL SERMON: T1

SUNDAY MORNING 13th AUGUST 2006

09h00

Communion Service

Scripture Reading : 1 Corinthians 11:23-34

PROCLAMATION AND DEDICATION

Introduction

I was given a book this week entitled "*The Lord's Supper is a Celebration of Grace*". This once again reminded myself that the communion service has a two fold picture

- Looking back on Christ's life and death and
- Looking forward to His second coming.

This double or two-fold picture is one sermon which you and I are preaching each and every day with all the people you and I come into contact daily either physically and/or telephonically. Whether we realise it or not, we are enacting this sermon of celebration. This simply service is not only a time of celebration, but also a 'memorial service'.

Now the word 'memorial' is not a strange word to all of us. The world is full of memorials, for example, 'the Cenotaph' in London, 'the Arc de Triomphe' in Paris, 'the Victorian Memorial' in Washington, as well as places of historical events such as the Normandy Beaches and Gettysburg Battlefield etc. They are all powerful reminders and testimonies that those that have paid the ultimate sacrifice do matter to us today.

Many of us here today continually remind ourselves of departed loved ones on special days and occasions.

So here this morning we gather to celebrate and remember what Jesus has done for us some two thousand years ago, To meditate and to begin to realise what it cost God to send His only begotten Son, and the terrible sufferings Jesus suffered, as well as the agonising death of crucifixion.

Alas we must not just dwell on these terrible yet wonderful thoughts. We must proceed further and see the victory that was won for us at Gethsemane when the cry went out through all the Universe *“Why seek ye the Living among the dead – He is not here – He is risen”*. Yet things do not stop there Jesus ascended to be with His Father and we have the Holy Spirit to lead, to guide, to comfort, to encourage, to help us all through life.

Having said all this, what does this verse really mean?

1 Corinthians 11:26 “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes”

I wish to look at two questions :-

1. What does the Lord’s supper teach us about Christ’s Death
2. What does it mean to proclaim Christ’s Death

1. What does the Lord’s Supper teach us about Christ’s Death?

This celebration shows us very clearly a dying Saviour for sinners. This was the great work that Jesus came to do as the Saviour of the world for you and for me. The Incarnate birth, the wonderful and magnificent ministry would count for nought if Jesus had not submitted Himself to death on the cross. Yes the manner of the birth, and the ministry is important, but it is the redemptive work on the cross that secured the redemption for sinners such as you and I.

The death was a violent death – a cruel death, not only a cruel death but a conquering death. Conquering by the very fact that Christ's death put '*death to death*'. No wonder God turned His back on His Son when He saw the filthiness of sin, that even Jesus cried out "*my God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me?*". Oh! The mercy that God has for us. Oh! The love that Jesus has for us, Here was the demonstration of grace in its fullest meaning.

What does the Lord's Supper teach us about Christ's death? The answer is very simple.

God in His mercy saw the miry sin that we are in and brought in the plan of redemption through the love of His son Jesus, so that we might be reconciled to God once again.

Grace – wonderful Grace. The Lord's supper is not a funeral remembrance of a departed one, but an exultant anticipation of a returning Conqueror

2. What does it mean for us to proclaim Christ's death at the Table?

Do you know or realise that it is possible to come to the Lord's table with the sense what the Lord's supper teaches about Jesus' death, but it is something else to proclaim the Lord's death with eternal gratitude for the sacrifice for me and you that is so unworthy. Just spend a minute or two and note **Firstly that we must grieve over our sin**. It was our sin that took Jesus to the cross, in order that our debt to be cancelled in order to be redeemed. Therefore we must constantly remind ourselves that we are crucified with Him.

Gal 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ"

Secondly, that we must rejoice in Christ. If we believe that Jesus' death is available for our deliverance from eternal damnation, then we can only but rejoice in the Lord. This then ensures the Lord's supper is a 'feast' and not a 'fast'. Paul says in

Romans 5:11 *“We also rejoice in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation”*

John 3:16 gives us the full reason why we should be rejoicing at the Lord's Table.

Conclusion

What is the challenge this morning? What and how must I respond to the Lord this morning? The answer is, that we are to live day by day as the disciples of Jesus Christ. Yes, I do know that there are hypocrites in the church, yes I realise that many call themselves Christians and they are not etc etc, but we must not look at others, let's look at ourselves. Are we living in continuing obedience and devotion – the Bride – is fully adorned in all her finery and beauty then the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon us? Then revival will begin, then we will see souls being turned to the Lord, then we will make an impact in this community.

Let us get our hearts in tune with Jesus, let our lives show the mercy and love of Jesus, and there is no telling how much the Lord will use you. Will you not come to Jesus now? Will you not allow Jesus to have complete control of your life now?

13. APPENDIX 5 – TOPICAL SERMON: T2

Title: Living by God's principles (even when it doesn't make sense).

Passage: Daniel Chapter 1

Living by God's Principles (Even when it doesn't make sense)

Introduction

We live in a pretty mixed up world.

Terror scare in UK.

Rape, violence, corruption, fraud etc.

A world where Christianity seems to have less and less influence and say.

How are we to live? The world we live seems so far removed from that of the Bible. Can we really expect it to guide us through the mine field that we call life?

Today's world certainly has it's unique challenges but the characters of Scripture faced some pretty amazing situations themselves. None more so than a young man named Daniel and his three friends. It's a time in the Old Testament that closely parallels many of our own situations. Israel and the followers of Yahweh do not have control over their own destiny. They are a minority in a hostile world. The legal and social system was at best indifferent and at worst openly hostile towards their beliefs and practices.

It is with this in mind that we turn to Daniel and his friends for help and motivation to take a stand in this world of ours.

In Chapter 1 we'll see Daniel and his friends living according to God's principles in spite of the pressure of the world.

Next week we'll go to Ch 3 where Daniel's three friends are faced with trusting God when it seems ridiculous.

Finally we'll go to Ch 6 and see how Daniel deals with the pressure to compromise.

Background on Babylon

In 612BC Babylon conquered Assyria and in 605BC they defeated Egypt and became the ruler of the known world.

Following the victory over Egypt Nebuchadnezzar deals with Jerusalem in a brief siege. It's a devastating victory. The temple is ransacked and articles taken as a demonstration that the Babylonian gods were clearly superior to those of Israel.

Ashpenaz, chief of Nebuchadnezzar's court officials is instructed to collect a human tax in the form of some of Jerusalem's brightest young men. Amongst whom were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

Daniel, the author and main character in the book is to live and have influence in Babylon for nearly 70 years. He will serve under three Babylonian kings and will go on to serve under Cyrus, the king of Persian who defeats Babylon. Throughout this he maintains his faith and witness.

But that's getting ahead of ourselves. Let's take a more detailed look at Daniel and his friends and their introduction to their life in Babylon.

Standing on principle.

The situation is simple. The young men are slaves. Treated well because it suits their new masters but slaves nonetheless.

Their training has two key purposes, to remove their heritage and beliefs and to assimilate them into the beliefs and thinking of the Babylonian king.

It starts at a most basic level with the teenagers being renamed.

They are then placed into training and it is there that an issue arises that Daniel chooses to take a stand on. FOOD!! Some might say that's ridiculous.

These were Jews, inheritors of the Pentateuch, the Law of God given to Moses with all of its dietary guidelines. There may also have been the issue of food sacrificed to idols. And so Daniel and his friends take a stand.

Daniel 1:8 But **Daniel resolved** not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

A principle is at stake. (1:8)

“not to defile himself with royal food”

A resolution is made. (1:8)

“Daniel resolved”

A stand is taken (1:8)

“he asked the chief official for permission”

Faith is required.

“12 Please test your servants for ten days”

God honours the keepers of the principle (and blesses others).

DA 1:15 At the end of the ten days they looked **healthier and better nourished** than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

DA 1:17 To these four young men **God gave knowledge and understanding** of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could **understand visions and dreams** of all kinds.

DA 1:18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and he **found none equal** to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. ²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, **he found them ten times better** than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

NOTE: that this was a three year training program and while Daniel and his friends are vindicated in their stand they still remain slaves in Babylon for the next 70 years. Vs 21 “Cyrus”. But their story is a testimony to God’s ability to take those who are faithful to his principles and use them to influence society.

Application

We live in world that seeks to press us into it’s mould, hence Paul’s warning in Romans 12 not to be conformed to it’s pattern.

- It’s a dog eat dog world.
- Every man for himself.
- Time is money
- “But everyone does it.”
- If it feels good, it must be.
- Survival of the fittest.

The demands on our time, resources, ethics, values and beliefs are constant.

Some of God’s principles for today:

- Servant leadership (Matt 10:42-45)
- Sowing and reaping (Hos 10:12)
- It is better to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35)
- Love your enemies. (Luke 6:35)
- The first shall be last and the last shall be first. (Luke 13:30)
- Beatitudes - Blessed are the meek (Matt 5:3-11)
- Do not worry about tomorrow. Seek first the kingdom of God. (Matt 6:25-33)

The challenge of Daniel and his friends is whether we’re prepared to live by the principles that God has set out for us.

First we need to know what the principles are. We need to be students of the Word of God and it’s truths.

We then need to resolve to stand by the principles in Scripture.

Then we need to be creative about how we take our stand.

We need to be willing to trust that God is the rewarder of his people. Knowing who God is and believing his trustworthiness is the cornerstone of our faith.

Each situation will be unique and there are no simple formulas to where and when we'll be tested. We will need to be alert and will need to tap into the wisdom of God to know how and when to stand.

What are the situations you face?

Have you compromised and failed? There is forgiveness in Christ. *1 John 2:1*
But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

Have you taken a stand? Be encouraged to persevere with your resolution. Trust that God will vindicate you. If not in this life, there will be reward in heaven.

May God use each one of us to stand for His kingdom and testify to the truth of His principles.

14. APPENDIX 6 – TOPICAL SERMON: T3

Introduction

“Did you get it all this morning?”

Did you really

Do we get it all each morning?

Are we totally fulfilled as believers?

If SO... then why is it that we are never content?

We kind of move from one high to the seeking the next one

The cycle is like this – it starts young

- If I can just be picked on under fourteen team
- When I make that IF I can just get onto the first team
- If I can just get that girl
- If I can get just get that jacket then I will be there – then I will be respected
- I get the jacket and after a month I cannot even believe that I invested all that energy into having the jacket

And so it never stops

New phone (2 months later – I would rather have a different one)

New car

And so we never get it all – and life is defined by the drive to get it all – or we just give up trying

Christians are no different –

Jesus said “I have come to give you life and life to the full” (John 10:10)

But we do not have it we are always looking for it – caught in the rat race to discover something that will be “Good, pleasing and Perfectly right for me” – something that I no longer will need to look for something else to fill me

Some thing that brings hope and a future – but it never seems to happen

Questions: I thought Christianity would fill that drive BUT since coming to know Christ the drive to be filled has not been quenched – in fact if I had to be honest I am no different to the non believer.

So is all we have gained is

Heaven as apposed to Hell

BUT Jesus said (John 6:34) “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty

He also said (John 10:9) “I assure you, I am the gate for the sheep,” “All others who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. Wherever they go, they will find green pastures.

I think the mission Jesus called the Church to fulfill is a mission of hope – a mission that is different from that of the worlds – It is about green pastures

I think that there is a good pleasing and perfect way to be discovered that will bring hope to our nation

Rom 12:1-2 say

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

So if we are able to transform our minds we will enjoy the good pleasing and perfect will of God

Transform – means to change

ILL: When I came into the room every night I transform the floor

Seriously: To give it a new look

- I see it as taking a computer which operated on a dos system and replacing it with windows – we have transformed the computer

This is what I am feeling God is doing in our age as he rises up a missional minded church

- God is moving the church from earthly mindedness to Kingdom minded
- We are either going to join this move or we are going to be left behind

1. Jesus was a Kingdom Minded and this was enough for him – he never looked for more or was not satisfied

The Kingdom message was central Jesus' message of hope

Luke 9:10 When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, ¹¹ but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

“The Kingdom of God is like a man scattering seed...

“The Kingdom of God is like a mustered seed

“The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field

The Kingdom drove him

Luke 4: ⁴² At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³ But he said, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.”

He clearly established the urgency of the Kingdom

Mark 1:15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

He wanted to transform the minds of his followers – to Kingdom thinking

Matt 6:9 “This, then, is how you should pray: ”“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be our name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The work he gave them was Kingdom centred

Luke 9:1 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³ He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. ⁴ Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. ⁵ If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.” ⁶ So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

Jesus was about the Kingdom

Why all this detail: The point I want to make is that Jesus wanted to transform the minds of his followers from being earthly focused to being Kingdom focused

He was and he wanted his people to be

Jesus wanted to transfer His character and priorities onto this followers

The idea of transforming the mind – from the old self to the new self is one of having the earthly mindedness replaced with that of the Kingdom – then we will know God’s good pleasing and perfect will

2. What does it mean to be Kingdom minded?

This is when we have the mind of Christ in us

When we speak of The Kingdom we speak of

- that which brings glory and honor to God
- where God is and where God is seen
- something that is now present and evident in our lives
- something that is to come - the future speaks of a place where we will feast with the Lord

Luke 13:29 ²⁹ People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

ILL: Kingdom minded people are able to look beyond the earth to the hope of the Glory to come

Like Paul who writes

Romans 8:17 His Spirit lets us know that together with Christ we will be given what God has promised. We will also share in the glory of Christ, because we have suffered with him.

2 Tim 2:12 If we don't give up, we will rule with him.

3. What are the Character traits of Kingdom minded people

For us to understand what the Character traits are lets look at a contrast

With Money

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Earthly minded | - Are never satisfied with what they have |
| Kingdom minded | - live with the “daily needs” attitude and use the excess to invest into other Kingdom building |

With things they have

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Earthly minded | - It is mine |
|----------------|--------------|

Kingdom minded	- it is God and is on loan to me to build His Kingdom
With Time	
Earthly minded	- I will give God time on Sunday
Kingdom minded	- All my time is his
With people	
Earthly minded	- What can I get out of them or what can they give me - Think only of themselves (well most often)
Kingdom minded	- how can I be used to bring God's Kingdom in this persons life <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can I serve you• How can I meet your needs
With decisions or hardships	
Earthly minded	- How can I make the best out of this situation?
Kingdom minded	- What is God wanting to achieve in this situation
With opportunities	
Earthly minded	- What can I gain from this
Kingdom minded	- How can I build Kingdom in this
With Church work	
Earthly minded	- What is my church giving me
Kingdom minded	- What does God want me to add to his Kingdom
With Work ethic	
Earthly minded	- I will only do what is easy and suits me
Kingdom minded	- Whatever it takes

With leadership

- Earthly minded - How do I look (my Church, My Bible study)
- Kingdom minded - How do I serve and how does Christ look

So Character of a Kingdom minded person will be

I exist for God

Establishing Gods work on earth is my goal, vision, passion

Other mater more than myself

God's will be done

I am available

I own nothing

Rom14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, ¹⁸ because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

If we are Kingdom thinkers we read the Lords prayer in a whole new way

Kingdom is central to the Lords pray

Matt 6:9ff

These is no doubt in my mind that Jesus called us all to be Kingdom Builders

He never called us to go to church

To attend a cell group

To have church conflicts

To get our way

He called us to build HIS Kingdom

I am left wondering if we are doing this or if we have got so lost in doing the things that this world has told us to do

I am left wondering if Christians would be "getting it all" if we start focusing on the Kingdoms needs and not our own

I am left wondering how much of an impact we would make in Africa if the Kingdom were our priority

I am left wondering would we have all we have if the Kingdom was really our priority

I am left wondering what the Lord thinks about how we spend our time, energy and resources?

I am left wondering if I am really a KINGDOM minded Christian
OR am I just religious

Jesus said Matt 11:11

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

Peter upon you I will build my church and the Gates of hell will not prevail against it

15. APPENDIX 7 – TOPICAL SERMON: T4

1) Submission = {Equality} (v.21)

Context of Eph:

Arranged marriages of the one hand and loose morals on the other. The principles that God lays down are for our success. Live according to God's Law and you will always win! No matter what your specific situation.

→ Male + Female = Man = Image of God (**Gen.1:27; Gal.3:28,29**). It is not a question of who is better, but of how can we achieve God's purpose together. How do we accurately express our Submission to God and one another so that God gets all the glory and together we get the job done (cf.Prov.31).

"The trouble with marriage is not the institution but the personnel"

(Jas.1:17) Every good and perfect gift ...

"Success in marriage is not so much about finding the right person as it is being the right person."

"Church" – a fem noun!

5 stages of Christ's Love (vv.25-29)

(5:23) "Saviour" – Therefore submission to Christ ...*grateful acceptance of His care...power to care, not to crush* (J.S.)

(Ps.128:3)

Vineyards required long-term intensive care (Isa. 5:1-7; Mark 12:1). The soil was first dug and cleared of stones and a wall (or hedge) erected to discourage predators (Ps. 80:12-13; Song of Sol. 2:15).

Vines required heavy annual pruning (Lev. 25:4; John 15:2), hoeing (Isa. 5:6), thinning and support of fruit clusters, and sometimes irrigation (Isa. 27:3). Intensive labor heightened expectations of the harvest and made loss of the vintage a bitter disappointment (Isa. 5:2; Deut. 28:39).

Used symbolically, the vine was the emblem of prosperity and peace among the ancient Hebrews.

Flourishing vineyards meant peacetime; war's devastation was represented by a ravaged vineyard: walls broken, vines choked by thorns, branches trampled by wild beasts (Isa. 5:5-6; Ps. 80:12-13).

NB does not equal Inferiority (Phil.2)

2) Submission = {Dignity} (v.21)

Submitting to one another is not a loss of dignity but a demo of it!

"...out of reverence for Christ" - Act of worship!

We are created to Worship God therefore we are most human when we worship Him by serving one another.

Shows greater dignity and freedom than an individual who cannot bear to be a helper and partner to anyone but themselves. (Stott).

It is the higher way, it is Christ's way – the right to imitate Christ Himself (Eph.5:1).

3) Submission = {Harmony} (vv.22-25)

In the word "wedding" "We" comes before "I"!

(cf. Chp.6 – Sp. Warfare).

Harmony in the home creates stability in the fight (J.S.)

"A house divided against itself cannot stand" – Jesus

Sadly, looking our for #1 = last place!

Harmony does not = Uniformity → Orchestra ...

"Tunnel of Conflict" (Warren). NO such thing as harmony without conflict . Its how we handle it.

"Happily ever after is not just a myth, it's a tragedy!"

4) Submission = {Freedom} (vv.25-31)

"submit" – (mid. Voice). "Agape" – sacrificial love that sets us free.

~The bondage of false expectations ...

We complain when our spouse does not "pull their weight" but its not our business! (Remember your vows!)

~The bondage of Immorality/ Adultery (sticky tape)

“One flesh” - the trouble starts when we try to decide which one!

5) Submission = {Maturity} (vv.17,18)

“be filled” - (pres. Permissive passive imperative).

3 Evidences of being filled with the Spirit: -

joyful, thankful, and submissive.

A consequence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is fulfilling your role in your relationship with God & your spouse.

It is critical that we make this connection. Common denominator in all my relationships is me! The strength of my relationships is a very clear indicator of who is in control of my life.

CONCLUSION

Our understanding of marriage reflects our understanding (or lack thereof) of Christology ...

Irrefutable evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit:

Joyful, thankful, and submissive.

“Pilgrim Psalms”

Family units would travel to Jerusalem to worship together.

Blessing of God on whole families, family worship – if you don’t have “family altar time” please make it a priority. Pick a time, a night of the week where you spend time together in Bible study and prayer. Listening to my boys pray simply and honestly is a precious memory I will never forget!

→ David Brown 26 yrs later!

(what an awesome day that was!)

It is always fruitful to work in submissive obedience to God.

It is always a blessing to eat the “fruit” of our labour. Hand-outs cause tragic loss of dignity.

Cf. Ruth & God's provision for the poor. They had to labour in the field and pick up the "gleanings" it was not handed to them! Ruth received from Boaz, after he had observed her hard work.

Olive plants "*peculiarly luxuriant*". (symbol of Israel).

The tree became a symbol of fertility (Ps. 128:3), beauty (Jer. 11:16; Hos. 14:6), divine blessing (Deut. 7:13), peace and bountifulness (Gen. 8:11), and it was inextricably associated with Jesus (the Mount of Olives [Mark 14:26; John 8:1]).

- olive branch as symbol of peace (**Gen.8:11**).

"King of the trees" (Jdg.9:8)

Oil used in coronation ceremonies of Kings.

Used as: fuel, medicine & food.

The "trap" of temporal blessings.

Winning the lotto has proven to be the worst luck some people have ever had! (causes strife in relationships and often bankrupts people).

(Ps.1)

What is the whole deal with the peace of Jerusalem?

Should we pray for a city, a people who do not acknowledge God in His full revelation in Christ. How should we pray for them? When will there be peace in Jerusalem? Only when they worship the Prince of Peace!

Those who are truly holy are truly happy.

Pursue happiness, but we will never find it. Pursue holiness and happiness is a delicious by-product. Joy is even better!

The fear of the Lord – that is true blessing!

16. APPENDIX 8 – EXPOSITORY SERMON: E2

COMMANDMENTS OF BLESSING

SERMON NINE

“Nothing but the truth”

Exodus 20:16

“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour”

I am reminded of the man who went rather fearfully to the dentist to have a tooth extracted and just as the tooth was about to be pulled, he gave the following clear instruction to the dentist. “I want the tooth the whole tooth, and nothing but the tooth”. At the same time he told hold of a rather strategic part of the dentists anatomy and said to him, “We’re not going to hurt each other now are we?”

Today we are not going to be speaking about a tooth, but about the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth and what God expects of us in this area of speaking the truth. In this day and age it is very rare to find someone who consistently speaks the truth and who can be depended upon to do so. In an age where truth has become relative and there are many different shades to the truth, at times it is almost difficult to distinguish fact from fiction and the line between truth and lies and deceit, has become blurred.

In this ninth commandment God gives a very direct and clear instruction about not giving false testimony against a neighbour. The context of this instruction is a court of law in which one has been summoned to act as a witness. This narrow application of the Law in the Old Testament is expanded upon in the New Testament; as is the case will all of these commandments. Paul picks up on this commandment and writes in Ephesians 4:25,29, “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body.....Do not let

any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen". Paul takes the narrow Old Testament commandment about testimony in a court of law and expends its application to all of our lives and all our interactions with others. I've entitled this message "nothing but the truth" because this is God's desire for us as well as his channel of blessing into our lives. A life that is characterised by truth is a blessed life. I want to invite you to join with me as we look at this together this morning.

1. PROBLEM WITH TRUTHFULNESS

The problem we have with being truthful is simply that it does not come to us naturally and that our natural orientation is one of being untruthful. The psalmist highlights this problem in Psalm 58:3, "Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies". You don't have to teach a child to lie when it comes naturally. The prophet Jeremiah also understood something of the condition of our hearts when he notes in Jer 17:9. "The heart is deceitful above all things...". Deceit implies untruth and lies and there is nothing more deceitful the prophet suggests than our very own hearts. Jesus on one occasion said of those who did not follow him in John 8:44, "You belong to your father the devil and you want to carry out your father's desire...he is a liar and the father of lies". These may be difficult words to accept but if we are going to do anything about the state of our hearts then we need to recognize ourselves for what we are. Our natural orientation then is to deceive and to lie. The problem with this orientation is that it destroys both the people we are lying against as well as ourselves. We may well destroy the reputations of those we lie against but we also destroy our own integrity because the reality is that these lies are ultimately shown up for what they are and our integrity is destroyed. The wise writer of Proverbs notes in 17:20, "he whose tongue is deceitful falls into trouble", and in 26:28, "A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin". The

consequence of lies and deceit are hurt and brokenness, hence Gods commandment to speak the truth. I am sure each one of us have experienced the pain of being at the receiving end of someone's lies. Have we however not been guilty of lying against someone else? The problem with the sin of lying is that one sin inevitably leads to another as we have to lie and lie again to cover up the first lie. What a burden this becomes. Mark Twain once said that you do not have to have such a good memory if you tell the truth, because a liar must have a good memory. As sinners, the problem of lying is one that we all grapple with.

2. PICTURE OF PERFECT TRUTHFULNESS

As I have often mentioned, God never gives to us an instruction that he himself does not imitate and give us a perfect example. The Scriptures are pregnant with the truthfulness of God's person and character. In Num 23:19 we are told, "God is not a man that he should lie" and in Hebrews 6:18, "it is impossible for God to lie". In terms of Jesus Christ we are told of him in John 1:14, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth" and John 14:6 Jesus describes himself as "the way the truth and the life". In terms of the Holy Spirit he is called in John 14:17, "the Spirit of truth" and in John 16:13 Jesus says of the Spirit, "He will guide you into all truth". The triune God is a picture of complete truth. All that he is, does and says is motivated by his character that is truth. This stands in contrast to Satan whose name means the deceiver and his described as being the father of all lies. It is for this reason that he can be trusted and relied upon. This is God's desire for each one of us that our lives be characterised by truth. This has become a possibility with the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit within our lives.

3. PRACTISE OF TRUTHFULNESS

Having looked at the problem of truthfulness, the picture of truthfulness, I want us to look practically at the practice of truthfulness. How do we do this on a

practical basis? The Word offers two significant pieces of advice in this regard.

3.1 Power of the Spirit

We can only live a truthful life when we are walking in step with the Spirit of truth who lives within us. This life of truth is about being true not only with those around us, but also with ourselves, and with God. In John 16:13 Jesus says that the Spirit will guide us into all truth. Not only does the Spirit guide us but he also convicts us when we do not speak the truth enabling us to confess this sin and have our relationship with God restored. Not only does he convict us of the truth but the Spirit also gives us the courage and the confidence to speak the truth when perhaps we may be fearful to do so. We cannot live a life of truth apart from the Spirit of God.

3.2 Motivated by love.

Paul speaking about the unity of the body in Ephesians 4 instructs us in 4:15 that we are to “speak the truth in love”. We can sometimes use the truth as a weapon to break someone down and to serve our own purposes. Paul makes it clear in Eph 4:29 that whatever we say must be aimed at building one another up in love. Deceit and lies break down, but the truth spoken in love is able to build a person up. The truth at times can be painful and cause discomfort but when shared in love with the person’s interests at heart it can be used to bring about healing and restoration.

CONCLUSION

Jesus once said that the truth shall set you free. It sets you free from the burden of guilt when you are living a lie. It sets you free to be real and honest as you talk the truth in love. As we walk, talk and live in the truth of God’s light, we will experience the blessed life. The Psalmist understood and experienced this. Notice what he says in the psalms.

Psalm 26:3, “I walk continually in your truth”, 119:30, “I have chosen the way of truth”. David knew this to be the secret of his blessing. What about you?

17. APPENDIX 9 – EXPOSITORY SERMON: E3

Parables About the Kingdom of Heaven

#5 The Parable of the Hidden Treasure - Matthew 13:44

13 Aug 2006

Morning Service

Does God ask too much of us sometimes? Are the claims of the gospel too great? Luther used to say that God asks the impossible in order that we would lean on Christ for the strength to say yes

The parable (v44)

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

Interpretation

No interpretation. It's interpretation is similar to the others and especially similar to the previous parable about the mustard seed that grew.

1. What's the parable about?

1. Hidden treasure— last time saw the phrase "leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of measures of meal. We are fascinated by hidden treasure, buried treasure and treasure maps and the pot of gold at then end of the rainbow and when we get older that works out into playing the Lotto and trying to win at Caesar's palace. [Crossword puzzle that I could not complete but guaranteed a holiday]. Sticker spot.
2. Discovered treasure- No value in a hidden treasure story where the treasure is never found.
3. The threat- The land in which he found the treasure wasn't his. Under rabbinic law if a workman found a treasure in a field and lifted it out, it would belong to his master, the field's owner; but here the man is careful not to lift the treasure out till he has bought the field. The parable deals with neither the legality nor the morality of the situation (as with the parable of the thief in the night) but with the value of the treasure, which is worth every sacrifice.

4. Resolution of the threat- He sells all he has and buys the field and, of course the treasure.

Imagine: The friends of this man must have shaken their heads when they saw that everything this man owned was up for sale. More frustrating than this was the fact that when he was asked by his friends what he was doing, he refused to answer them at all. It was a subject that he was determined not to discuss with anyone. Was he leaving? Would they wake up one day to find that their friend was gone. Was he mad? He seemed rational. His prices were reasonable and consistently priced. There was no indication in any other way that he was losing his marbles. But why wouldn't he say anything? What man is his right mind, sells everything, his house, his car, gives up his job for this prolonged and 'everything must go' extended sale?

2. What does the parable mean?

2.1 Who is the man? Is he Jesus or is he any human being?

2.1.1 Jesus

Field is the world. The purchase of the field refers to Christ's work on the cross to provide salvation for the sins of the whole world. The treasure is the church and the cost of winning her was very great even Jesus own death.

Heb 12:2

“Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb 12:2 NKJV)

2.1.2 Any human being

Agree: Reasons: Speaking only to disciples here. And the other parables deal with the gospel and in the case of the first parable, the sower, deals with different responses to the gospel-so to here. V36 “when the crowds left and went into the house. And the disciples came to him.” This is for disciples ears only.

2.1.3 What is the treasure?

Review of parables and the theme or focus of each in order to determine if there is a common thread that strings all the parables together.

Sower – the gospel and its effect

Weeds – opposition to the gospel and the final conclusion

Mustard seed – the gospel will achieve God's purpose in making a mature church

Yeast – the gospel will achieve God's purpose in making a pure church

Treasure – the treasure of the gospel in Jesus Christ

Main Focus: Those who are convinced of the importance of salvation, will give up everything to win Christ, and eternal life.

2.2 Notice the two words; 'with joy'

This wasn't drudgery, or a slog and a chore. He wasn't sad or depressed or distressed as to how much work he had to do to sell everything to get enough money to buy the field. No trouble, no unhappiness, no sadness. No! With JOY!

He was persuaded that there was a "treasure hidden in the field," which would amply repay him, if he bought the field, however great the price that he might give. He was convinced that *he had found a thing of great value*. He was satisfied that *it was worth a great present sacrifice to make this thing his own*. Others might wonder at them. Others might think him foolish for paying such a sum of money for the field. But they knew what they were about. He was sure that he was found a great bargain.

3. What do we learn about the 'kingdom of heaven'?

3.1 There is no greater treasure than Jesus Christ

No eye has seen—"He is our treasure and our great reward, our hope and our glorious king."

3.2 Joy is found in making the treasure yours and not in other things

"¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Mt 6:19-21 NKJV)

“³³ "Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. ³⁴ "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Lu 12:33-34 NKJV)

Where is your treasure? In Jesus or in what your possessions?

Does Jesus ask too much? Rich young ruler

“Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” (Mr 10:21 NKJV)

The man who built bigger barns

Lu 12:21 "So [is] he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Paul

Faith in Christ is described as treasure:

2Co 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

He describes Jesus Christ as the one ³ “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col 2:2-3 NKJV)

3.3 We have no joy when we have no treasure

If this man in our story had not discovered the treasure he would have gone on with his humdrum life without every having the joy that comes from

Maybe we lose our joy when we consider the cost is too great

Compare that with some of the faces of Christians you might have met this week. Compare that in fact with your own face as you woke up and realised it was Sunday and it meant meeting with Jesus, listening to His voice. His voice tells you today, dear believer, dear child of the Great King, have joy. Listen to what He says to all his disciples in Jn 16:33

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Are you weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care. Take heart. Yours is the greatest treasure on earth and in heaven. His name is Jesus. His Name is mighty Saviour. Prince of Peace. Even the angels tell us, “Do

not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all people, for there is born to you, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord... Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to all men." Therefore, "Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me."

Listen to Bishop J.C. Ryle,

Behold in this single picture, ***the conduct of a true Christian explained!*** He is what he is, and does what he does in his religion, because he is *thoroughly persuaded* that it is worth while. He comes out from the world. He puts off the old man. He forsakes the vain companions of his past life. Like Matthew, he gives up everything, and, like Paul, he "counts all things loss" for Christ's sake. And why? Because he is convinced that Christ will make amends to him for all he gives up. He sees in Christ an endless "treasure." He sees in Christ a precious "pearl." To win Christ he will make any sacrifice. This is true faith. This is the stamp of a genuine work of the Holy Spirit.

4. Application

Consider all things as nothing compared to the great treasure of Jesus Christ Phil 3:8 (NLT) "Yes, everything is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all as rubbish, so that I may have Christ."

4.1 What are the all things here. I have 4 listed in increasing difficulty.

4.1.1 Aspirations- my dreams of my future

4.1.2 Possessions-all I own and ever will

Bruce Wilkerson – Focus on the Family- shared that twice he had felt as if God was asking him to give up his house. Sold his house and gave the money to ministry. Twice.

4.1.3 Family- all the ones I love

4.1.4 Self- all that I am

4.2 Life is selling to gain

Explain – where are we? Have we discovered the treasure? Have we bought the field yet? We have yet bought the field. We're still selling possessions. Day by day, we sell to gain. We count the next things loss. We sell all we have and are. Day by day to gain the treasure. Yes, you've seen the treasure. But right now, its auction time. The hammer sounds day by day. Yes Lord, you first. Yes Lord, this must go.

4.3 If you feel the cost is too great then you have not understood the great treasure that Jesus is- discover the treasure again

Jesus wants you completely, dreams, possessions, family relationship, most of all, you.

Read Foxes book of Martyrs pg.

18. APPENDIX 10 – EXPOSITORY SERMON: E4

Mark 11v12 – 21

13 August 2006 am

A bad day or a gracious warning?

Introduction

In the reading of this passage, have you found yourself wondering if these incidents of the fig tree and the temple seem **somewhat out of sink** with the gentle and compassionate nature of the Lord Jesus Christ?

There have been those who have in fact **rejected the fig tree incident** claiming it is false – they say that it does not belong in the gospel. Listen to the conclusion reached by NT scholar **TW Manson**:

“It is a tale of miraculous power wasted in the service of ill temper (for the supernatural energy employed to blast the unfortunate tree might have been more usefully expressed in forcing a crop of figs out of season); and as it stands, it is simply incredible.”

William Barclay agrees, adding, *“The story does not seem worthy of Jesus. There seems to be a petulance (crabbiness / ill temper) in it”*.

They say this can't be true because it seems to them that Jesus is acting **like a spoiled child** who did not get his own way.

Are these people right?

If we **stand on the word** that claims that *“all Scripture is God breathed... then they cannot be right. These incidents are true; they did happen – Jesus was saying something to those people.*

They are included in the gospel by the Spirit of God because **God has something important to say** – even to you and me here today.

1. How then do we understand these incidents?

A closer look at the passage **helps with a solution**. Notice that the fig tree incident “sandwiches” (11v12 – 14 & v 20 – 21) the temple incident 11v15 – 19.

- **The fig tree and the Temple incident are connected.**

The **two are connected** and cannot be interpreted in isolation from each other, to do so will end up in error, interpreting either then in isolation from the other leads one in the wrong direction.

Mark mentions that **the tree did not bear** anything more than leaves ...*because it was not the season for figs* (v13). Now if it is **not** the season for figs why curse the fig tree for not bearing figs?

This detail is a **clue** for the reader to look beyond the surface and to see its symbolic meaning. The incident **is not just** about a particular unfruitful fig tree;

- **It has to do with the temple and the people of Israel.**

Jesus had **the day before** made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He had received the hallelujahs of the people, he had wept over the city (*Luke 19v41*), and then...

Mark 11:11 Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Having looked around at everything **he saw what was going on**. He must have seen the fruitlessness and the corruption of what the people were doing at the temple.

That then **provides the context** for the return journey back to the temple the next day...

Mark 11:12-13 The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs.

This then provides **a perfect illustration** of what he saw at the temple. The fact that this particular fig tree had luxuriant foliage, but bore no fruit portrayed exactly what Jesus had seen in Jerusalem.

2. Implications

2.1 God does not tolerate gainful false advertising?

The tree gives **the impression** that it might have some fruit for the picking - something to eat for the hungry and needy traveller, but on closer examination it is fruitless.

It is actually just **like the temple** giving the impression that it is a place dedicated to the service of God, but actually it is not God who is being served or worshipped.

Instead it is **the priestly hierarchies** who are the ones benefiting from the religious activities in the temple.

There **may well be an apparent** vitality or richness of religion and liturgy **but** if it is without the fruit of the Spirit and God centeredness – then God will not be honoured but provoked to anger and wrath.

Is this warning message something we need to hear in our day? I believe it can apply in at least three areas:

- **Cultural or notional Christianity**

Many in the so called **Christianized world** have been baptized or christened, many belong to churches and denominations, some even involved in doing Christian things - but it is all external.

Many people are involved in varying degrees with **outward forms** of Christianity.

They show the leaves, but leaves without the fruit will add to their condemnation.

There **must be fruit** from our hearts, and fruit in our lives. We must show the fruit of repentance toward God, we must exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and demonstrate true holiness in living.

Without this fruit we will **only sink further** and further in to lost ness and separation from God forever.

- **Organized religion**

Are there any individuals (leaders), churches, para church or even mission or mercy organizations present today where their **activities operate under the Christian banner** but they are not true to what they claim to stand for?

There may be those **who claim** to be sent by God and who claim they serve God and His kingdom **and yet** they do not in any way promote the glory of

God or the good news of Jesus Christ – *came to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.*

Instead those who drive these so called ministries are themselves feathering their own nests, enriching themselves (money, status or applause) at the expense of God's work and name.

Are there any situations that **exploit the name of Christ and his church** for their own benefit? This is a serious matter and provokes the judgment of God. For God will not and does not tolerate gainful false professions of faith.

- **Man centred ministries**

Are there people in the pew and pulpit who promote and participate in “ministries” that **pay lip service to God and the gospel** of the Lord Jesus Christ but are “in it” to serve their own religious wims and fancies?

There are those situations where the **focus is on the people** and God is seen to be nothing more than a “genie” that must provide on call.

We must note that Jesus **curse the fig tree** thus providing the disciples with a graphic prophetic lesson.

Mark 11:14 Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.

2.2 God will judge and destroy all “attractive” but “empty religion”

The **disciples heard** him say it and then the next morning **they see** with their own eyes the effectiveness of his curse and spoken word of judgment.

Mark 11:20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.

You will know when **Jesus finally died on the cross**, giving his life as a ransom for many (more next week when we focus on his action at the Temple)

...Jesus breathed his last. 38 the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Mark 15v38)

And then in **AD 70** the temple was destroyed never to function again!

And then finally, **that day** when he will judge all ungodliness

2 Peter 3:7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

God will indeed **judge and destroy** not only that which is obviously evil like Satanism or stuff from the occult **but he will also** judge and destroy all the attractive self serving empty religion that so easily deceives and leads astray.

Conclusion

It is a good thing in the light of the warning here about false and selfish religion that **Jesus is on his way to the cross**. It is there that he will give his life as a ransom for many.

It is there that we can see and experience his love, mercy and grace... for it is while we were sinners Christ died for us.

Again though this message today He **calls us to repent**, to turn from our empty shells of religion to true faith and trust in God.

19. APPENDIX 11 – TOPICAL SERMON: T5

40 Days of Community

“Why We Need Each Other”

And we're going to start our 40 DOC with a message that really is pretty radical. It's the exact opposite of what you've been taught your entire life. But God says, "If you will do what I tell you to do, you will never again have to deal with loneliness. You'll be able to overcome fatigue, fear, failure, and frustration. Your life will be so much easier if you'll just do it the way I planned for you to do it." The anecdote to all of those things is the **concept of community**.

Now we love our independence. We have been taught that happiness is the result of independence, and that if I'm financially independent, if I'm relationally independent, if I am independent in every way, then I will be the happiest. And yet, we have never had more unhappy people, and suicide rate continues to go up. Why? Because that's not the answer. The truth is, happiness does not come from being independent, isolated, living your life with all the barriers up and all the masks and keeping people at an arm's distance. That's not the way to be happy. Happiness comes from **interdependence**, from community.

Notice what the Bible says there on Romans 12:5. "*Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other and each of us needs all the others.*"

We do need each other. We just don't realize how much we need each other because we are taught independence. Now during '40 Days of Purpose' that we did two years ago, the big idea was that God put you on this planet for **five reasons** and we talked about those five purposes that God put you on earth to fulfil. That's the big idea.

Let me give you a bigger idea. You cannot fulfil any of those five purposes **on your own**. You can't do it by yourself. It's impossible. God wired you and wired all of us in such a way that we can only fulfil His purposes for our lives

in community, in his family, in relationship to each other. We need each other. That's the big idea we're going to look at for the next 40 days.

Now, today I'm going to give you a little introduction. And we're going to look at ***why we need each other***. The five reasons why you need a church family, and more than that, five reasons why you need to be in a small group with a few other people who you get to know on a deeper level than just casual acquaintance.

The Bible gives us 5 reasons:

1. I need others to WALK with me. In other words, I need people to help me grow spiritually. The Bible says in Colossians 2:6-7 (ESV), "*Just as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.*"

Now the Bible often calls your spiritual life, your walk. It calls it "the Christian walk" or "the spiritual walk." Why? Because life is not just a sit-down thing, it's a journey. You're always growing. You're always moving. There is a destination to get to. And the Bible says that as you walk through life, God wants you to do certain things.

Now throughout scripture it tells us, particularly in the New Testament, we're to walk in the light, walk in love, walk in obedience, walk in the Holy Spirit, we're to walk as Jesus walked, and walk in wisdom. In many ways the Bible tells us how to live this kind of life. But one of the important things is this: **God never intended for you to walk through life alone**. Never. Now let me make this clear, this has nothing to do with whether you're single or married. We have single adults who are in this church, who are actively involved in community. They're not walking through life alone. And we also have people in this church, who are married, and desperately lonely. So marriage is not the anecdote. Community is the anecdote.

Now some of you say, "Well what's wrong with walking alone? I like to walk alone. I prefer to walk alone. I get my own way when I walk alone." Well, that's part of the problem... you're not learning cooperation. You're not learning

relationships. You're not learning love. God says, "I want you to walk through life with other people close in relationship with you," and he says it for three reasons. You might just write this in the margin.

Number one: **It's safer**. It's safer when you walk with others through life. There's safety in numbers. It's a whole lot less risky. Have you ever had to walk through a dark alley at night by yourself in an inner-city area? It can be quite frightening. It's safer to walk with others.

Second, **it's supportive**. It keeps you from giving up. When other people are walking with you, they keep you going. Have you ever done a marathon where you're running and, all of a sudden you get a stitch in your side, and you want to give up? And you want to give up but if other people are walking or running with you, then you keep on going. There's an old Zambian proverb, 'When you run alone, you run fast. But when you run together, you run far.' The life that you live is not a 50-meter sprint, it is a marathon and you want to run far.

And number three, **it's smarter**. You'll learn a whole lot more when you go through life with other people close to you. I'm not just talking about casual friends. I'm talking about people who are in true fellowship with you.

And so sometimes, if you're just walking alone, you may be walking in the wrong direction and nobody's there to tell you. The Bible says in the multitude of counsellors, there is safety. And so it's smart and it's supportive and it's safe.

One of the things as I said that you learn by going through life with a few close intimate friends is you learn things that you wouldn't learn any other way, like cooperation and like how to get along. You see, the number one goal in life is learning to love God. The number two goal is learning to love other people. Why? Because God is love and God wants you to be like him. So he says, "I want you to practice learning to love."

Now when you walk with other people, have you noticed that people walk at different paces? Have you ever tried to walk with your husband or wife around

the lake or something, and it's always slow down or speed up or something? We have different styles of walking.

But we all walk at a different pace and so when you walk with others, you have to learn cooperation. Now look at this next verse, Genesis 2:18, "*It is not good for man to be alone.*" That's the first thing God said after he created Adam. Everything was perfect, but he said, "It is not good for man to be alone." God hates loneliness. You can bank on that for the rest of your life.

And so, he created two groups. He gave you a **physical family** and a **spiritual family**. The physical family that you grew up in, and the spiritual family that you live your life in, because your physical family doesn't last. They die, and they move away and things like that. So you need a spiritual family, and that is the church. And actually, your spiritual family is going to last a whole lot longer than your physical one because it's going to go on forever and ever into eternity. God's safety net is his family. Notice Hebrews 10:25 says this, "*Let us not give up the habit,*" that means you do it all the time, "*The habit of meeting together, instead let us encourage one another.*" I need people to encourage me in my daily walk. And he says, "How do you do that?" He says, "By meeting together."

Now that verse there, he's not talking about what we're doing right now. He's talking about community. Folks, this is not community. This is a crowd. And so, you don't have community in coming here to worship. Community is what happens when you're with three or four or five or six or maybe eight, maybe at the most ten or so other people. You get more than ten people in a group, somebody usually stops talking, and so you stop relating. You see, you could be in a crowd, you could come to church every week for years and still be lonely because you never know anybody.

Now would you write this down: **Community is God's answer to LONELINESS**. We need a few people in our lives that we know really well, and they know us really well. And we all need a place, we need a group, where we can practice relationships and really learn to love.

[Music break] *Stuart to sing*

Now that's what we're going to talk about for the next 40 days: What the world needs now is love and we don't often even know what love is all about. We don't know really how to relate to each other. We don't know how to build great, healthy, strong, lasting relationships.

Now notice what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 14, there on your outline, it's talking about when you get together and it says this: *"When you gather, each one of you be prepared with something useful for all, sing a hymn, teach a lesson, tell a story, lead a prayer, provide an insight. Take your turn with no one person taking over. That way... you all learn from each other."*

Now question, does that sound like something we do here on Sunday morning? No, we don't do that. I don't say, "Anybody got a poem?" "What happened at work this week?" "Can I pray for you?" We don't because this is too big. This is not a community. This is a crowd. What I just read, there's only one place that can happen: In a small group. Church for worship, house to house for fellowship, and you need both to be a balanced believer, and to be healthy spiritually.

Now what is the goal here? When you walk through life, you need a small group of believers walking through life with you. And that's the goal, Ephesians 4, the next verse, *"As each part does its work,"* that's all of us in the body of Christ, *"It helps the other parts grow. So Christ's whole body,"* that's the church, *"is healthy and growing and full of love."* That's what God wants. He wants us all to grow, and he wants us all to be full of love.

And how do we do it? We get in the situation where everybody can help each other on a personal basis. Now that's what '40 Days of Community' is all about and during '40 DOC,' I want everybody to get in a small group. I'm talking about 100% of our church.

Now so far in our church, 40 people have said, “I’ll open up my home during ‘40 days.’” In fact if you said, “I’m going to open up my home,” will you stand up right now. Give them a hand.

Now these people want you in their home. So if you’re not in a group yet, speak to one of them or see the lists outside.

The Bible says this in 1 Peter 4:9, “*Open your homes to each other without complaining.*” Yeah, okay, complaining. Question: What’s your complaint? What excuse have you been using for not opening up your home? “Well, it’s too dirty.” Well, Martin will come help you clean it. Just invite him over. He is a very fast cleaner. You say, “Well, it’s not big enough.” Well, is it big enough to hold three people, maybe four? That’s all you need for a group. Just get some friends... get some people who owe you money. Invite them over. Use that leverage. You say, “Well I don’t know if I want to do it... I don’t like my neighbours.” Well, don’t invite them. I’m not telling you that you have to invite people you don’t like. No, find people you like. People you work with, you go to school with, people who are friends, relatives or neighbours or something like that. Some of you say, “Well Mike, nobody would want to come.” Are you kidding? Do you realize that in every human being’s heart there is a longing for belonging? Inside, everybody wants relationships. Nobody wants to be lonely. That’s why solitary confinement is the worst form of punishment. We were made to belong. And that’s why people join all sorts of stupid causes, just to belong to something. And they’re looking for an opportunity to get to know other people.

Let me give you an example: Two years ago when we did ‘40 Days of Purpose,’ we had 200-230 people in our church involved in a small group. And you were all encouraged to invite someone to come to a small group. People who would not come to church, but would come to your house. And in one week here, we went from 200 people in small groups to over 600 people in small groups. From 23 small groups to 74. Don’t tell me people aren’t interested. They are. They’re interested.

All right, that’s the first reason why we need each other because I need people to walk through life with me.

2. I need others to WORK with me. Do you know that the Bible says God put you on earth to do certain things? And you need other people to help you do those certain things? The Bible says in Ephesians 2:10, “*God made us to do good works, which he planned in advance for us to live our lives doing.*”

Before you were even born, God decided what talents you were going to get, what natural abilities, what gifts, what background. He decided what country you would be born in. He decided all of these things because he has a certain thing that he wants you to do with your life, “your good works.” And that is called your ministry. Anytime you use the talents God has given you to help other people, that’s called ministry or service. It’s helping other people. But God doesn’t want you to do it by yourself or you’ll get worn out, he says you need other people to work with you.

And remember, that life on earth is practice for heaven, for eternity. And in heaven, you’re going to do four things, and one of them is serve God. God says, “I want you to practice serving while you’re on earth.”

Now in heaven, nobody’s ever going to get tired doing their work because we will all share it together. And everybody just has a little part; you don’t have a whole lot. You’ve just got a little part to do in heaven and so, you’re never going to get tired.

Now on earth, you’re tired all the time. In fact, you were tired probably coming to church this morning. And the reason you’re tired is two things: 1) You try to do it all, and 2) You try to do it all by yourself. God never meant for you to do that. He meant for you to have other people in your life. So you’re not trying to do it all, and you’re not trying to do it all yourself. No wonder you’re exhausted all the time. You’re not in community. You don’t have other people helping you.

Now God tells us why we need others to work with us. Look at the next verse, Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, “*Two people are better than one because they get more done by working together.*” You know that’s true. You always get more done by working with other people.

Now, I would be a basket case if I had tried to do all the ministry here at WBC by myself. But I have Steve, and George and Linda and the Elders and of course many of you. All with different assignments. Nobody's good at everything. We need each other. And the key is you need people in your life who are strong at things you're weak at.

To quote Rick Warren, "Snowflakes are frail but if enough of them stick together, they can stop traffic."

Now I can't do a whole lot on my own, and you can't make a very big impact on the world on your own either. But you know, you get enough snowflakes together, they can do something. And in this church, we've got between 600 and 700 snowflakes. That'll stop something. Better yet, it'll start something.

And God says, "I want to use you." You see, there's this myth, the Mother Theresa myth, of the lone person going out there to save the world on their own. That's not what Mother Theresa did. Mother Theresa had an army behind her of other sisters. She had an army of other people helping in the streets of Calcutta. You see, together each of us... together, can make a difference if we each just do a little part. It's not a big thing. It's just a little thing.

The reason why you're so exhausted is you don't have anybody helping you. Would you write this down on your outline: **Community is God's answer to FATIGUE**. Did you see the movie *Witness* where the Amish build a barn together in one day? The whole community turns out. Everybody does a little bit and the thing's done like that.

During '40 Days of Community,' we're going to take on a number of projects as a church. If everybody in our church got in a group and every group gave about **two hours** to this project, you have no idea what could be accomplished. It just isn't that hard.

Galatians 6:10 says this, *“Every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith,”* that’s the church. You see, God uses ordinary people.

All right. I need people to walk with me and I need people to work with me.

3. I need others to WATCH OUT for me. I need people who will defend me, who will protect me, who will stand up for me when I need somebody to stand up for me, who will help me stay on track, who will warn me. I need people to watch out for me.

Philippians 2:4 says this, *“Look out for one another’s interests, not just for your own.”* Now that’s a countercultural statement because in South Africa, everybody says, “It’s all about me. It’s all about my rights, my needs, my interests, my hurts, and the rest of you, forget you because really it’s all about me.” And yet the Bible says, “Look out for one another’s interests.”

Have you ever seen any of these ‘Neighbourhood Watch’ signs in some areas? That’s a sign of community. It says we watch out for people here. We take care of each other. If you go on holiday for a week or two, you probably tell your neighbour, “I’m going to be gone for a while. Would you keep an eye on my place?” Because we all want our stuff looked after. So we ask our neighbour. “

Well, let me ask you, do you have anybody looking out for your soul? Because your soul is more important than your stuff. Is there anybody who is helping you out in your spiritual journey? Who’s watching out for you? To make sure that you’re still growing? To make sure that you’re not getting discouraged and depressed and feel like giving up?

You see, the fact is we all have blind spots. There are things in our lives that we can’t see, that only other people can see. I mean if you have a taillight that goes out; you’re never going to know it. Somebody’s got to tell you, “You’ve got a taillight out.” If you’ve got lettuce in your teeth or meat on your face, friends don’t let friends have meat on their face.

So we need people who watch out for us, who love us, who go, “Hey you know, you’ve got a little food right here. Get rid of it.” That’s why we need each other.

I need others to watch out for me. The Bible says this in Hebrews 13:1, “*Keep being concerned about each other as the Lord’s followers should.*” Christians ought to take care of Christians. People in the church ought to take care of other people in the church. It says, “Keep being concerned about each other.” That means be vigilant. You don’t just do it once. You just keep on doing it. You know in a war, everybody has to stand guard duty at some point, where everybody else is asleep but you stay awake to watch out.

Did you know that you have a great enemy? His name is Satan. And he hates you and wants to defeat you, he wants to mess up your life, he wants to hurt you, harm you and make you totally ineffective. He wants you to miss God’s will. He wants you to waste your time. And every morning before you wake up, he’s planning how to get you to waste your day, to get angry, to get impatient, to get lustful, to get worried, to get fearful and all these other things, to get depressed. And he’s going to pull whatever works on you, on you.

There were some reports put out on the 9/11 tragedy. It’s pretty fascinating reading, listen to this section and tell me if it doesn’t apply to your spiritual battle with Satan every day because you have an enemy too. Listen to this, “*We learned about an enemy who is sophisticated, patient, disciplined and lethal,*” well that applies to the devil to, “*The enemy rallies broad support by political grievances but its hostility towards us and towards our values is limitless. Its purpose is to rid the world of religious pluralism. It makes no distinction between military and civilian targets; collateral damage is not in its lexicon.*” Satan doesn’t care who he hurts if he hurts you, hurts your friends, hurts your children, hurts your parents.

You see, Satan’s objective is he wants to hurt God. But he can’t hurt God. God can’t be hurt. So what does he do? He hurts God’s children. If you couldn’t hurt me, what would you do? You’d go after my wife or my kids. And so, Satan can’t hurt God, so he tries to hurt God’s children.

The report continues, *“We did not understand how grave this threat really was,”* and most Christians don’t either. *“Now we didn’t adjust our policies and our plans and our practices to deter or defeat it,”* and most Christians don’t either. *“The test before us is to sustain the unity of purpose, and meet the challenges now confronting us. We need to design a balanced strategy for the long haul to attack terrorists while at the same time, protecting ourselves against future attacks.”* Now did you get that? They say not only do we need to protect ourselves from a future attack; we have got to go after them.

And when it comes to spiritual battle when you’re fighting the devil, it’s not just protecting yourself, but it’s also go after him. Now, most of the time, we’re defeated. Let me say, the devil doesn’t wear a red suit with a tail and pitchfork and come up and say, “Boo!” How does the devil work in your life? Habits, you can’t break. Hurts, you can’t forgive and let go of. Hang-ups you can’t change. Problems, circumstances, relationships that mess up your life; it’s all indirect, and he’s always trying to mess you up that way.

And most of the time, we’re defeated. Why? Because we try to fight it on our own, by ourselves. And you’re never going to beat the devil on your own. Never. You need other people in your life who are watching out for you. The Bible says this in Ecclesiastes 4:12 (NLT), *“A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back to back and conquer, and three are even better for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.”* That’s why you need a small group.

Question: Who’s watching your back right now, spiritually? Is there anybody in your life who is so close that they are helping you and making sure you don’t fall into the typical traps that mess us up? Anybody like that? If you don’t have that person, I pity you because you’ve got a big bull’s eye on your back for the devil.

Here’s another question: Who’s back are you watching out for? You can’t expect anybody to watch out for you if you’re not watching out for anybody else? If you care enough about anybody else, you’ll say, “You know what? I’m going to be with you through thick and thin.”

While living in Margate I used to dive for crayfish. Now, everybody knows that you never swim in the ocean by yourself. Never. You take a buddy with you because you never know if you're going to get caught a riptide. You don't go through life by yourself.

Even the pros need someone watching their back. And you do too. Would you write this down: **Community is God's answer to DEFEAT**. The Bible says this in Ecclesiastes 4:10, *"If one person falls, another can reach out and help but people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble."* Now this is one of the values of small groups. It gives us support.

I need people to walk with me through life and I need others to work with me and I need others to watch out for me.

4. I need others to WAIT AND WEEP with me. What am I talking about here? I need people who are going to be there in the inevitable crises of life. When I'm waiting for the bad news or when I'm weeping, when I got the bad news, I need people in my life.

Now as your pastor, I feel this one very deeply because I see it often in our church. There are many situations in life that nobody should ever have to go through alone. Nobody should ever have to sit alone in a hospital, waiting during a life or death surgery. No woman should have to wait alone while she's waiting for a lab test from a problem pregnancy. No one should ever have to wait for the news from the battlefield alone. No one should ever have to sit in the home, waiting for the identification the body of a loved one who just had a heart attack in your home. They shouldn't have to wait alone. No one should ever have to stand at an open grave alone. No man or woman should ever have to spend the first night alone when his wife dies or her husband dies. And no man or woman should have to spend the night alone when the wife walks out, or the husband has walked out. I could go on and on and on.

We were not meant to face the crises of life alone. Now the fact is some of these things are going to happen in your life. And only a fool would go through life unprepared for what they know is inevitably going to happen. You need

the support network in your life now because you don't know when the crisis is going to come, when the earthquake's going to happen... you need that support group, those three or four... you don't need a lot, you don't need a hundred but you do need five or six people in your life who are going to be there when you need them. And the time to prepare is now.

Now God says that the safety net he planned for your life is a group of believers who are committed to you. The Bible says this in 1 Peter 3:8, "*You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other.*" Now when you go to hospital, you don't want the whole church to visit you. In fact, that would not be a good idea. But it would be nice to have five or six people visit you, and to say, "We're praying for you. We're going to be here."

I've have said many times, I could not make it without my own small group, the 10 people in my group. This last year alone we've been through all kinds of personal and family crisis you could imagine and they were there to wait for each other, and to weep with each other.

Here's God's plan, 1 Corinthians 12:26, "*If one member suffers, all suffer together.*" You know, there have been a number of cases where people have died at home in bed and nobody discovered them for days and some instances weeks. How tragic that they had no relationships in life who missed them. Imagine the despair, nobody should ever have to die alone.

Would you write this down: **Community is God's answer to DESPAIR**. The Bible says, "*Be happy with those who are happy and weep with those who weep*" Romans 12:15. You party when people have a celebration and you weep when they have a tough time.

By the way, people often don't know what to do with tears in a small group. And they'll be sitting in a small group and then somebody starts crying for one reason or another. Let me give you a little tip: Tears are always the tip that it's time to stop and pray. When tears come, it means it's time to stop and pray for that person. Tears are time to pray.

You don't have to fix people's problems. When they're going through a crisis, they often don't want advice anyway. They just want somebody to be there. You just sit there and be quiet with them. You don't have to say anything profound, usually we get in trouble when we start talking. Just be there with them. They don't need a lot of advice. Just be there with them.

The Bible says in 1Thessalonians 5:11, "*Encourage each other and strengthen one another.*"

There's one other reason why you need other people in your life and it is:

5. I need others to WITNESS with me. What does that mean? Well, God has a plan for your life and he has a purpose and he has a mission. And you have a life message that God wants you to say to the world and your life message, if you don't share it, it won't get shared.

Now that's kind of scary sometimes, sharing your life message with the world. That's why you need other people in your life. I need people to help me fulfil the mission that God put me on earth to fulfil. Now there's great power in a group witness. When people come in here and they look around and they go, "Whoa, look at all these people! Something must be going on here."

But how do we witness? What's the best way to witness to people who don't know the love of Jesus Christ yet? Well I'm going to tell you and it'll surprise you. **It's by loving other believers.** That's what Jesus said. Look at the Bible. Jesus said in John 13:35, "*Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.*" Notice he said, "Your love," not for me, not for God, he said, "Your love for one another," for other people in the family of God, is the proof that you're in the family of God. If you don't love other believers, you have every reason to doubt 'Am I in the family?' Because he said, that's the proof. One of the ways you know that you've stepped across a line and you're in God's family is do you love the other people in it? He says, "That's how you know."

You see, the thing that proves to the world that we're Christ's followers is not our buildings, not our music, not our sermons, it's our love for each other. And

during the next 40 days, we're going to start a revolution of love right here that is going to reach out to the community around us. 2 Timothy 1:7 says this, *"The Holy Spirit doesn't want you to be afraid of people, but to be wise and strong and to love them and enjoy being with them."* That is like 'Invite them into your house!'

I love you folk; I really do. I want to ask you again, "Is anybody going to be in heaven because of you?" I want to guarantee you something. If you will get in a small group just for six weeks and invite someone else who maybe does not know Jesus to join you to they watch these videos. I'll help you be able to answer that question, "Yes, at the end of 40 Days, somebody is going to be in heaven because of me." You don't have to be afraid about it. We're going to do it together.

Would you write this down: **God's answer to fear is COMMUNITY**. The Bible says, *"You're working together and struggling side by side to get others to believe the good news,"* Phil.1:27. That verse has the two goals of '40 Days of Community' in it. *"Working together side by side,"* we want to deepen the community in our church, *"to get others to believe the good news,"* to reach out to the community around our church.

We all need each other. We need other believers to walk with us, to work with us, to watch out for us. We need other believers to wait and weep with us, and we need them to witness with us.

Remember the commitment card you filled in last week? **(Click to last slide)** I want to ask you again that you would clear your calendar as much as possible for the next 40 days. If you do, I guarantee you. You're going to look back on these next 40 days and say, "That was the turning point in my life." We want this church to be all about community. And God has chosen you, the people right here to make history. I don't want you sitting on the sideline. God didn't bring you to this church, at this time to watch it happen. He brought you here to be a part of what's going to happen. He brought you to this church for this purpose. Let's pray.