

We WILL Go

Helen Harray

22 February 2009

OPENING: Vicar of Dibley clip.

Context: New Year 2005 Geraldine turning 40. Wants to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Live Aid concert where people stood together and said people are starving and we're mad as hell about it. She suggests they write letters to the PM and say it's time to do something about poverty once and for all, but they don't even know who the PM is, still believe it's Margaret Thatcher and have even less interest in the issue of poverty let alone doing something about it. They are more interested in the pumpkin committee and jaffa cake.

But after cajoling them along a little more she asks them to come up with some ideas.

And here's where we pick it up.

It may have been 2005, but the problem of poverty is no less.

The programme raises the question of our response and accurately caricatures our ability to happily live in our own little worlds either oblivious or overwhelmed about what we could possibly do.

Our theme is MISSION POSSIBLE as followers of Jesus we are matured and formed as we go.

Richard has been focusing on what it means to be a follower of Jesus in the past two weeks.

THE CALL

This begins with the call of Jesus to every person to put trust in Him. Jesus said: Come to Me everyone who is heavy laden... had a gutsful of trying to survive life on your own terms and ability and I will give you rest.

- companionship...relationship with the Creator of the universe...depth of meaning and purpose, healing and wonderful relationships, peace and joy.

Take my yoke upon you ...let me walk through this life with you and I will teach you how to find it in abundance and depth... to find real life.

THE COST

Real life however he never said was about comfort and settling down. He never promised us prosperity and a life of ease. What he actually said was that those who followed him would deny themselves and take up their cross, and paradoxically everybody who does this...loses his life for Christ and for the Gospel will save it.

Now if I was you I would really want to talk about this and unpack what it really means! And if you were in a small group you might do exactly that.

Or if you want to study what being a disciple means: go to Mark's gospel.

THE POWER

I was looking for a metaphor to describe the power that God adds to us to be a follower. A follower of Jesus is like finding yourself at the controls of an Airbus A380. There's sooo much power tied up in it, it's scary as!! But you and Jesus are in the cockpit. You are yoked in here with the **creator of the universe who knows how to drive this airbus!!!! And you are in for the ride of your life. But maybe your image is of a little toy airplane or a mini car and you are not really sure of the actual power you have in Christ.**

What Jesus does not do is take over the controls all together. Like a control freak with a remote. Neither does He abandon you to try and drive this thing without any manual or on the job training. He expects you to get actively involved with him in flying this thing. This is where life begins.

And sometimes to get us on the way I think what I see Jesus doing is like sending the airbus into a steep ascent and then plunging it down in an outrageous bid to get the adrenalin pumping and us going: God help!!! Show me what you want me to do.

Let's look at scripture Mark 6 the feeding of the 5000. Here we find the disciples in a steep learning curve. The disciples came to him and said everyone is hungry: ³⁶ Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." **He says: YOU go do what I've been telling you these past few years. Put your faith into action.**

³⁷ **But he put it back to them, "YOU give them something to eat."** and then they freaked out. Now you're in the airbus screaming as it's going into a steep descent. You feel out of control...

They said to him, " Are you kidding that would take just a about a year's wages. **So he sends them out with something simpler: Go and see how many loaves you can find and bring them back to me.**

When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish."

³⁹ Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves.

Then once again Jesus involves them in the miracle.

Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and **the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish.** ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand. **They distributed the feast and they collected the remains and marvelled at what had happened.**

And so Jesus demonstrates what's it's like to have God on the airbus...5 loaves and two fish becomes enough to feed 5000. And they were part of it. They didn't get it but they were doing the stuff of being a follower and learning on the job.

At other times they went out there by themselves and Jesus rejoiced because he saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven as captives got set free.

BUT we are prone to tow problems: 1. We try to fly solo!!!!

There was one time the disciples had been sent out to preach the Gospel, heal the sick and cast out demons and they came back really frustrated. The disciples could not help a boy with an unclean spirit who was having fits, and it was creating a huge scene in the public place. Everyone was getting real angry until Jesus came along and commanded the demon to leave. Later the disciples asked him why they couldn't cast it out. And he said: this kind can only come out by prayer.

I suspect that the disciples had got a bit blaze. Easy to do. You stop relying on God, the power of prayer and think you can handle it fine by yourself. We could apply this to all sorts of things and it's a big lesson.

Followers of Jesus must learn this major important lesson. Every day we have got to be placing ourselves in submission to God, praying, reading the Bible and acknowledging our need of Him to live this life right and to serve and worship right. Busyness will kill it. Pride will kill it. Fear will kill that relationship...until we wake up and find that we really need God and we have lost sight of Him. Become a Proverbs 3 person: trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path.

2. We sit in the airbus as a passenger!!!

We miss out. Inaction is deforming. Our faith is not stimulated, we are ignorant and uninterested. Our prayer is unfocused or non existent and our reliance is on ourselves most of the time except when something goes wrong. Unfortunately we reap a loss of joy, passion, and our comfortableness becomes more and more difficult to give up.

But these disciples stuck with Jesus and when he was crucified they were distraught. They were like dead men walking. They loved Jesus, despite their failures and when he reappeared to them and everything finally became clear, they were on fire. And they took the message of Jesus love and resurrection to the city and from there the Gospel spread throughout the known world even

to the ends of the earth and today we reap the benefit of that. These disciples figured out how to fly that airbus in league with the creator of the universe and **they made a difference and the call on our lives as Christians is no different.**

We are not saved by what we do, but after we are in relationship with Jesus, we are not saved to sit in a pew.

AND there is a problem.

One of our biggest problems in the west is obesity. We have too much food while 2/3rds of the world is starving, both physically and spiritually.

Every seven seconds somewhere a child dies under the age of 5.

More than half the world live on less than \$2 a day.

One billion people in the world do not have access to clean water.

40% of people in the world lack basic sanitation.

It would cost \$US10 billion to provide universal primary education and that's half of what the US spends on ice-cream every year. So we have the financial resources. The question is: Do we have the will? Not can we?- but do we want to? Hugh Evans 25yr old Australian social entrepreneur, coming to Dunedin on April 2nd.

Never forget that behind every statistic is a real person, a real child, a child dying or a child crying because he has lost his mum.

And over 2000 verses speak about these very issues: the cry of the poor, of justice and call into action our attitude to the poor.

God always hears the cry of the oppressed.

God searches for a community of people to care for the things he cares about. To forget this, to fail to hear the cry, to preserve prosperity at the expense of the powerless is to miss what God has in mind.

At the height of their power the Israelites misconstrued God's blessings as favouritism and entitlement. They became indifferent to God and to their priestly calling to bring liberation to others. And they were put into exile.

Exile is about the state of your soul.

When you fail to convert the blessings of God into blessings for others.

When you find yourself a stranger to the purposes of God.

Rob Bell: Jesus wants to save Christians

Now you could easily hear this as being guilt inducing. Helen I hear you but I am struggling to make ends meet and I live in NZ. What can I do??

Please don't hear this. I am not into that. Guilt is not helpful. But honesty is; so is awareness and knowledge. What we have forgotten is the bigness of the Airbus!! It wasn't the disciples who multiplied the food, it was their willingness to care in the first place and be part of the miracle. Each of us can contribute something and together the Kingdom will come.

- **I have been challenged so much lately**

I live this lie that I need to hang on to things. I need to conserve my money, energy and time. I don't have enough spare to give away any of it and I am just a little person what could I possibly do to change anything political or practical. When we lived in Invercargill, with nothing in the bank and three small children someone gave me \$5. I was terribly grateful for it. It impacted me. A little goes a long way.

And so it is possible we could actually do something that changed a small corner of the world, rather than feeling impotent.

God has done some major work in my heart and my conception of possibility!

- Took me half way round the world to meet Emma and vv.
- And the vision and action of some studentsoul people has prodded me to take things seriously...fair trade, \$1/day, Trustbank, foodbank and students have been to Burkina and India and Malawi already this year.
- And every day I wrestle with how we will reach a vast population of students who are further and further away from God
- I've begun to have my heart changed and my compassion restirred and my outrage convince me that if I sit round and change nothing, nothing will change.

I would like us to become a more externally focussed church.

Throughout his prophetic book, Isaiah exposes the inadequacy of the faith of people who focus on loving God but forget about loving others. Externally focused churches are internally strong, but they are oriented externally. Externally focused churches measure not only what can be counted by also what matters most -- the impact they are having outside the four walls of the church. They ask, "Whose lives are different because of this church?" Nearly everything that is done inside the church should prepare and equip people not only for personal growth but also for personal impact.

*The Externally Focused Church Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson group
Publishing 2004*

Maybe I have come to the conclusion that my contribution can be to stand up and take the lead. To say: we can make a difference. Together. This is team work. I think the Spirit is moving in the world right now, to prod Christians to think that things can actually be different. We don't have to take this lying down.

We can challenge the status quo, and like one starfish after the other , we **can** make the difference. Oh God give us the insight that this is a spiritual battle we can fight. That spiritual and physical transformation occurs when the church understands that everything that cripples the image of God is sinful. Dirty water, lack of food, inequality, slave trade...in Christ these things can be restored through us as His agents. **Jesus never said: worship me, He said: follow me.**

What shall we do?

1. Cultivate open handedness and generosity
2. Become part of a group where there is an external focus, where together as a team you can see where God will lead you.
3. Pray. Learn how to pray and intercede. Join us in the staffroom to pray for this school and for the ministry of the church
LeithValley/studentsoul.
4. Raise your awareness and knowledge and let God give you compassion.

Here's two particular plans:

1. One life: Make it count. a reverse miracle: water into wine.
2. **A mission possible group with the long term aim of identifying a mission interchange and of raising our awareness on a theological and practical level.**
3. The local mission: How will we bless this school and our local community?

What I want us to take away from today is this: WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE: The disciples were incredibly thick at times, slow learners par excellence, but they went out there and obeyed Jesus and things happened. **Our lives and our church and our community will be transformed as we are obedient to the sharing of the Gospel together.** The Gospel call is to be in the world, being the hands and instruments of justice, peace and reconciliation.

We are formed in Christ as we serve. It was in the going that the disciples had success and failure and grew up as a result. Jesus disciplined them on the job.

Something is better than nothing. No matter how little or how insignificant.

Even standing in solidarity with the poor by wearing an armband is significant. Your intercession, compassion is an act of warfare against the status quo.

The 10/40 Window is the rectangular area of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude. 60 countries, 100 Gateway cities and every major non Christian religion, plus 85% of the world's poor and 2/3rds of the world's population live here. About 1.4 billion have never heard the Gospel. **Of the poorest of the poor, more than eight out of ten live in the 10/40 Window. On average, they exist on less than a few hundred dollars per person per year.** In 1997 alone an average of 438 Christians were martyred every day in the 10/40 window. There is a remarkable overlap between the poorest countries of the world and those that are least evangelized

Externally Focussed Church

Worship that is not manifested in how we live in relationship with others may be hollow. We aren't the first ones to experience this. In the years preceding the Babylonian captivity, Isaiah had a message from God concerning Israel's "internal" focus -- along with an exhortation to move beyond formal worship to true righteousness:

"Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me...I cannot bear your evil assemblies...They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen...Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice; encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow (from Isaiah 1:13-17, emphasis added).