

The Highs the lows and the everyday grind.

A story of ups and downs and the life in-between.

Texts:

Matthew 4 - The Calling of Peter and Andrew
Luke 23 & 24 - Death and Resurrection of Jesus

Mini Mihi

- Introduce myself as a student - last 28 years of education
- O-week challenges (dodgeball, pub crawl, and Ball)

Brief acknowledgment of previous sermons -

1. Open our Eyes Lord: Prophetic tradition - speaking out in favour of the oppressed, poor, vulnerable
2. Micah 6.1-8 - to act for justice, to love mercy; & to walk humbly with God.
3. Salt and Light - Sermon on the mount straight after the beatitudes.
4. Micah 6.8 - Springboard to talk about Justice, Mercy and Faith...picking up on what Nancy had preached on being "Salt and light"
5. Jesus sets us Free, using the sermon on the mount, among other things, challenged us to seek reconciliation

A warm welcome to you whether you are a university student or a lifelong learner in the school of life.

The Highs the lows and the everyday grind.

Today, I want to use the life of the disciples, particularly those 3 years they spent with Jesus... today I will:

- point out some of the highlights of their 3 years w/ Jesus
- acknowledge a few of the low points of their 3 years w/ Jesus
- suggest there might be a significant amount of stuff not recorded in the Gospels about the ordinary everyday life of the 12.
- teach you a 3-letter portuguese word

Fishing

Intro

The backdrop to all of this is this notion that one day Jesus went into his public ministry and decided that the right way to do that was by recruiting 12 people to go with him. This was the way Jesus decided was best suited to ensure his good news would reach the whole world.

And may be, in a loose and limited sort of way, we can compare those three years they spent following Jesus with our time here at University.

Lets number a few practical things that following Jesus meant for the disciples:

Now... There's a Christ College in Christchurch

Already a Christ University in Bangalore (which means if you are a disciple today and go there, you might be able to double major in Theology and IT)

So I decided to call it Christos University (no info on google)

Christos University

- Leave home/family
- All they could take was all they could carry.
- Give up their jobs
- Taking on a label that would attract prejudice "Christian" (fish symbol)
- 3-year degree that offered no guarantee of paid employment
- no student loan or debt
- no tuition fees
- no 2 for 1 pancakes capers

I say this with humour, but this was actually the recognised way of gaining an education at the time. You wouldn't say "hey I'm John and I went to Otago Uni", you probably say "hey I am John and I sat under the tutelage of such and such". It was more about the person you followed... so much so that when a this big argument broke out in Corinth (an Paul writes about that in Corinthians 3) some people were saying, "well I follow Paul", others were saying "I follow Apollo", or "I follow Peter", or even some were having to qualify it by saying "I follow only Christ". Paul himself is described as being a pupil of Gamaliel (a respected Law scholar of the time).

So it is probably not such a silly idea to explore the similarities between our life at university and the life of the disciples during those 3 years of Jesus' public ministry on earth.

And it is also a powerful reminder that whatever ends up written or not written on that piece of paper at the end, what matters most is not the institution you have become affiliated with, but the **Person** you have been following.

May be all you remember is working hard to get those NCEAs, and all of a sudden, you woke up in Dunedin, and its O-week.

Remember who you are following... you may be disorientated, but you are not lost.

May be you're not a student, and your job sent you here but you wanted to stay where you were... you may be frustrated, but you are not lost if you know who you are following.

May be you want to stay, but your job is telling you you have to go... heck may be you don't have a job and haven't had one for a while. You may be tired and down, but you are not lost.

May be you've never left, but you've also never felt like you have gone anywhere either, you wish you had left but the time is passed, and you feel like you've been just treading water... you are not lost.

In the name of Jesus, the only one worth following, you are not lost.

You are part of a long history of followers.

May be you were one of the top students at your high school, and as the year goes on you will realise that there are hundreds at your level, and possibly dozens above. And when you feel like you are a "dime a dozen", remember you may have your work cut out for you, but you are not lost if you know who you are following.

Yes there will be highs and lows, and a lot of down time in-between them.

Highs

"Junior Youth" - highs and lows of the week: Back in Dunedin vs. Hailstorm.

** no high fives.

Let's go back to that moment on the boat and re-trace some of the highs that those two and the others that joined later would have witnessed and experienced.

Shortly after the 12 had been all recruited Jesus is invited to a wedding where they saw with their own eyes, water turn into wine.

What sort of stories do you think they would be telling around the table/fire?

Since they didn't have the New Testament yet, I imagine stories like that of David and Goliath, Escaping from Egypt (Red Sea and Jordan River), the walls of Jericho falling... were probably frequently told around the table/fire.

Imagine what it would have been like to see someone come up rolled up in rags like a mummy, missing fingers, possibly no nose, a peculiar pungent smell... and then seeing that same person again, whole - clean - healthy. Wow... we can't say that these guys had no highs.

How about when they were stuck way away out on the side of a mountain and Jesus is busy telling them things about the kingdom, and may be they lose track of time and realise they are out there with no supplies and nowhere to buy them. And they are all getting pretty hungry! and they saw a boy's packed lunch feed more than 5000 people!

There was even one point where they had just climbed up a mountain and up there at the top of that mountain they were so caught up in the joy of the presence of God... that they said to Jesus. Lets build some tents up here and live here forever.

But when the mountain top experience is over, there is only one thing left: the hike down the mountain. People are still not 100% sure of which mountain it was, but one thing we all know: getting off the mountain meant walking down.

In the last 10 years or so research has come out highlighting something climbers have said for decades... descents are statistically more dangerous than ascents.

Why am I saying this? so when you do have you mountaintop moments this year, remember to pick your route down the mountain really carefully, check your footing. This goes for everyone: novice, experienced, summer, ice, weekend climbers... Some of the worst most stupid decisions in my life have been made in the days immediately after some sort of spiritual/emotional high.

Make sure you have the right footwear, tread carefully, keep your balance.

But talking about highs, there is one moment in history (and I don't say in history lightly here) that is hard to beat.

We read earlier in [Luke 24](#). Imagine going through everything, the persecution, the arrest, the torture, the crucifixion and even the burial... and then arriving at the tomb and the tomb being empty, just as he had promised.

It took me years to understand (and I am still working on it) why when I asked my dad, I was no older than 8 years old, what his favourite passage of the Bible was and he told me Luke 24.

This was a high of cosmic proportions! But we know it was not all roses... they disciples were not flying around in private jets and staying in 5-star hotels.

Folks Life at Christos University had its lows, and there is no reason to think that life at Otago will not have its lows to.

Lows

Personal story: now what I am about to tell you is very serious and can be unsettling.

One of the lowest points of last year was when one of my classmates ended up taking his life. I remember feeling absolutely gutted, having this feeling of waste, I remember being angry and trying to find something and anyone to blame... until that angry finger turned to me, and I felt guilt. If only I had called him more often, if only I had offered study help. "But I was struggling with the same paper myself, I had nothing to give"... oh but you could have listened Waldir.

And the only thing I could hold on to (and that perhaps I could have shared it) was the fact that I Waldir, this South American import with possible one of the most bizarre employment history and a string of crazy dreams.

The one thing I could hold on to was the fact that I was following someone, I was not lost.

After the service, may be you'll have something to eat (we would love you too, we are prepared for that), may be you'll talk to some folk, make some new acquaintances, run into an old family friend... I don't know. And you may go home and end up never coming back, that's ok, we respect that.

So even if you are adamant that you do not want to be a follower of Christ, during this next year, or the next few, if you ever get to a point where hope seems to be just beyond reach. I want to tell you: that is a lie. There are always other options, other avenues, you have no idea of how many times you can re-invent yourselves. If you ever think you are approaching that twilight zone where dark and light are hard to pick out and grey seems to envelop hope in a cold misty cloud... there are people you can talk to.

- Student Health: GPs & Counsellors (community services card)
- University Chaplaincy - the chaplaincy room is called the "Upper Room" just off the link on the castle side of the building.
- Student Soul -
- Any of us: Kristin, myself, Ben, Nancy, Rachel

Can you imagine how low it must have been "when the disciples saw him dying... them taking his body away..." Luke 23

Let me tell you something from the heart:

There are many things that can go wrong this year, it's just the nature of the beast. But there is one thing that cannot go wrong - God will not stop loving you.

- You may not get into the course you were hoping for.
- May be you will lose a loved one or a close friend.
- you may get ill, like the really bad illness stuff.
- May be your girlfriend/boyfriend is going to break-up with you
- May be the all that time you put into your study means your friends may have to start doing things without you, and slowly you may find yourselves completely disconnected to those friends.
- Or may be you won't, and you'll hang out with them all the time and have fun, and that could mean the difference between a B- and an A-

Whichever way we look at it, there are things that could not go according to your plan this year. Remember, you don't need to be lost.

Even if you end up choosing to give up on being a lawyer, a dentist, or a doctor, or even on having a tertiary education.

Remember, you need not and must not give up on hope.

The disciples may have had their ups and downs, but they held on to their hope. It is all they had.

Everyday Grind - Same-old-same-old

Story: visa vs. 4 years to get registered

It seems that between the highs and lows there's that bit of life that is pretty much lived under the radar. It's like a calm sea where ordinary life takes place, there are no waves just a gentle roll. And at different times, we all find ourselves there bobbing around, treading water... waiting for something.

For about 10 years of my life I journalled consistently, and this has produced ten volumes of continuous badly handwritten babble - even I can only understand about 50% of what I wrote! Even if out of those 10 years I chose the three most eventful ones (3 years = length of course at Christos Uni), I can put that next to the Gospel of Luke for example, and I can see that Luke's Gospel looks small.

Why am I saying this? well, not to lead you to think that I am a great writer, for there are people here that have marked my work and know this is not the case. What I am trying to highlight is the fact that the record we have is a record of main

significant events. I think they are the inspired, inerrant, infallible selection of events, and I chose to heed to them as the word of God. But they do not give us a log of everything that happened.

How about the 30-odd years of life Jesus had as the son of a carpenter. What did he do, who did he talk to and befriend? Have you thought about this, 90% of the life of the incarnate son of God was lived pretty much in anonymity in a humble little town in the middle of nowhere?

The same goes for the disciples... how many churches and cathedrals around the world carry the name of one of those 12, and yet, we know very little about their lives before they enrolled at Christos University, and we don't even know a whole lot about them after Jesus ascended into heaven.

The disciples themselves would have heard stories like the people walking in circles for 40 years in the desert; like the one about Hannah who grew old asking God for a child, year after year going to the temple, making the sacrifices... and it wasn't until she was well over child bearing age that God answered her prayer;

Folks the highs and the lows make for great prime-time television, but there is an awful amount of life that is lived in dim-light conditions, with no special effects, with no fancy meals, with no treats, with no adrenaline rushes...

In those times where they weren't healing, or preaching, or helping, or listening to Jesus... when they were grocery shopping, cooking, fishing, organising accommodation, counting money.

By the things we read the disciples did and said and endured, I think it is fair to say that they managed to invite this hope into their ordinary everyday lives, and possibly drew strength and encouragement from that.

I want to leave you with a 3-letter portuguese word that means "believe" and encapsulates the dynamics of "highs, lows, and the everyday grind".

CRÊ

[Crucifixion - Resurrection - Eternity]

Crucifixion: the low of lows
Resurrection: the mother of all highs
Eternity: The redemption of time (monotony and boredom)

CRÊ: Crucifixion - Resurrection - Eternity

They are real

They are full of meaning

They can give you hope