

Luke The Evangelist 10: 1-9

After a Saturday morning meeting of Do Justice Jennifer left me with a challenge. Work Climate Change into today's sermon. Hmm...

I was already preparing by reading Brendan Byrne's commentary on Luke's gospel being reminded of its special characteristics. A major theme is the hospitality of God, and another is that salvation will prevail over judgement and sin¹. I found myself thinking about the movement from the macro to the micro. In the broadest terms the visitation of God to humanity is about saving humankind. At its narrowest its focus at this table today we will meet God as both guest and host. My question for you is what will God bring into your heart today?

I have some significant issues the concept of salvation. While studying Clinical Pastoral Education, I was hounded by a group of young Evangelical men who pressured me with the question; "when were you saved?" My reply was "I am not interested in that question. All I want is a relationship with God". That frustrated them. I decided to take a communion chalice to the next meeting. I put it on the table and said "this is what I know; the cup of salvation". They backed off after this.

Another characteristic of the gospel identified by Byrne is the encounter with the Living Lord². Stories draw us in and engage us. We can be the healing of Jairus' daughter, be in the crowd when the woman caught in adultery is accused, be on the beach when Jesus calls the fishermen to put their nets down on the opposite side of the boat. Some of us hunger for more of the Living Lord, so we seek ways to nourish our need. Some are spending time in Ignatian prayer where God is present in the imaginal world. We each need to find a way to walk with God that suits our personality type. You have heard

¹ Byrne, B. The Hospitality of God p1-8 passim

² Ibid.

me say before that we are all inspired and learn in different ways. Some of us prefer the kinetic. Learning feels right we learn as we are doing. Some are aural learners who need to hear or make music. Some of us are at home in the oral world and have a preference for speaking, listening or. So how do we find our bliss in God? Our individual sweet-spot that connects us with the Living Lord?

Richard Rohr reminds us that we are part of the Dance of Life³. We are moving with a partner, so finding who is leading this dance can take time. This week Rohr's and daily reflections connected us to St Francis' understanding that every living thing has its own creation story, its own language. In order to live harmoniously with the rest of the creation we must listen to and respect all of the harmonies moving around us. We must tune in to our ability to see beyond the physical reality that surrounds us, and awaken to the vast unseen world that exists. There are underlying structures that support our world and we need to live as multi-sensory beings listening to all sound from buzzing bees to the voices of trees, to the voices of our friends and neighbours who tell us that the delicate balance between all living things must be honoured and preserved⁴.

I turn again to Daniel O'Leary reflecting on a Papal encyclical on the environment. The Pope explains Jesus was the divine artist who invited others to be attentive to the beauty there is in the world because he himself was constant touch with nature, lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder. As he made his way through the land, he often stopped to contemplate the beauty sewn by his Father and he invited his disciples to perceive a divine message in things⁵.

O'Leary explains that the Pope provides the picture of Jesus sauntering along the roads of Palestine attentive to everything going on around him greeting people, listening to the birds watching the

³³ Rohr, R. Daily Meditation week 41, 2021

⁴ Rohr, R. Ibid.

⁵ O'Leary, D. An Astonishing Secret. P115

clouds, pausing by a river, asking questions, - in everything praising his beloved Father. These words and images says O’Leary are the heartbeat of the Incarnation- the very love and meaning of Christian care⁶.

So where do hospitality, salvation, and the dance of life in creation leave us today? Our gospel tells us the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. What is it that we are asked to glean from this metaphor of a waiting harvest? Sam Wells with HeartEdge vision tells us that future of the church is bigger than the past. Wells has a driving and purposeful question. How is the Holy Spirit working in the world? I would add how is it working in this parish, and in you? To pursue this issue Wells tells us we’ll need imagination, courage and a willingness to experiment.

Wells offers a vast array of case studies that demonstrate the HeartEdge theology. He explains that⁷: “This collection of case studies is a mini theology of the Holy Spirit. It traces the way the Holy Spirit works – blessing open-hearted, open-minded enquiry, exploration, discovery, partnership, and initiative. He doesn’t provide a model of church and strive to reproduce far and wide, this approach perceives how the Holy Spirit is working in the world, and sets up a tent there, harnessing the Spirit’s energy and yoking itself to the world’s imagination.”

So where do we stand in relation to the plentiful harvest? What are we asked to do? We are told that the Kingdom of God has come near and how should we respond to the Living Lord?

A respondent to HeartEdge experience explains the “coverage there is balanced and the inclusivity is commendable. The format of seeking the relevance of key contemporary issues discussed in the light of Christian faith today is most beneficial to people of any faith

⁶ O’Leary, D. Ibid.

⁷ HeartEdge Case Studies.

or none”⁸. For me this is a defining statement. We don’t have to be talking God language to be doing God’s work.

Another comments: “You made it feel really safe space to be real and authentic with whatever we were facing...I didn’t feel any embarrassment. Or shame in kind of turning up, feeling in a complete and utter mess. I don’t feel any pressure to be shiny or to try to portray a shiny story. Which is different from many church gatherings”⁹. These comments come from people outside of the church and they seem to me to provide important information. What sort of safe space do we provide in our own community for people of different views? Do we allow each other to feel a complete and utter mess? Do we insist on shiny stores? While we may be stinting in praise, or energy, or resources, God’s giving is boundless. This is Sam Wells message! One of the beautiful Ignatian prayers I’ve prayed of recent days states that God can work with the power in each one of us to **accomplish abundantly more than all we can ask or imagine**. The work for each of us is to find our spark and embrace it with confidence. You wouldn’t be on-line today without that light glowing in you.

The harvest is plentiful, and the Kingdom has come near!

AMEN

References

⁸ HeartEdge Electronic Communication Case Studies

⁹ HeartEdge Ibid.

Byrne, B. *The Hospitality of God* St Pauls Publication Australia 2000

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Rohr, R. *Daily Meditation* Electronic Publication Week 41
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