

Coach House Church BEACONS

LIFTER OF MY HEAD

27TH JUNE 2020

We have some sayings, or idioms in our language: a pain in the neck- when there is a nagging problem, usually a person, or stiff necked- meaning someone who is proud, arrogant and unbending, not willing to change or compromise. Neither of these are descriptions we would wish to be used by others about us. They are not positive or flattering.

But have you ever stopped to think how essential and important your neck is. Your neck is the conduit, the route from your brain to the rest of your body that carries the network of nerves and blood vessels, allowing us to move, to feel and to control what our bodies do.

As I've been working from home, using a laptop for much of the time, I am all too aware of the strain this puts on the neck, and how it can ache at the end of the day. Having your head down is not how we are designed to function at all.

We know that the neck also controls and directs the head. There are other sayings such as: chin up or heads up – these are phrases that are encouraging us to not get despondent about a situation. Maybe it's as simple as your team losing their motivation as the opposition score another goal. The coach will often shout 'keep your heads up!'

So what is it that pulls the head down? disappointment, despondency, worry and anxiety. Negative feelings of low self –worth, isolation and loneliness. We know how important our mental wellbeing is, that being anxious about things that haven't yet happened, might happen or just the general uncertainties of life can severely ruin the quality of life.

Corrie Ten Boon, who spent some time in a prisoner of war camp, and had just cause to be anxious, said: "Worry is like a rocking chair: it keeps you moving but doesn't get you anywhere."

This is a good illustration as we are often aware of getting no-where fast with thoughts whirring round our heads. The good news is that the bible has a lot to say to encourage us, to help us move from this negative standpoint to a positive position.

Psalm 3: verses 3-4 in The Message version reads like this:

But you, God, shield me on all sides; You ground my feet, you lift my head high; With all my might I shout up to God, His answers thunder from the holy mountain.

Psalm 3 talks of Almighty God who answers with a powerful thunderous voice when we call on him. It talks of God's protection on us, surrounding and protecting us. It reminds us that we are firmly planted on the earth-you ground my feet- but we can still call out to a higher power. The result of this is He is the one who 'lifts our head'.

There is a worship song by Robert Critchley called - My Troubled Soul and sometimes known by the refrain (Praise The Mighty Name Of Jesus). The song asks:

'My troubled soul, why so weighed down? You were not made to bear this heavy load' and goes on to say:

'My anxious heart... Why so upset? When trials come, how you so easily forget To cast your burdens, upon the Lord Jesus cares, He cares for you.

Jesus cares. He cares for you And all your worrying won't help you make it through Cast all your burdens, upon the Lord And trust again, in the promise of His love.

I will praise that mighty name of Jesus Praise the Lord, the Lifter of my head Praise the Rock of my Salvation All my days are in His faithful hands.'

The phrase – the Lifter of my head – is so powerful and echoes Psalm 3. Having our heads hanging low in despair or worry is not how God intended us to live. Philippians 4 urges us:

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Peace of mind is the opposite of anxiety. But to achieve this we have to present our requests to God, to share them, then hand them over to the one who can give us peace. When we say thank you for a gift, we look at the person giving us the gift, it's part of the appreciation. So, the very act of thanksgiving means we lift up our head. We don't look down at our shoes and mutter- that would be very bad manners.

Matthew chapter 5, known as the sermon on the mount, or the beatitudes, is where Jesus is talking to the crowds on a mountainside. At first glance it seems as though it is a list of hopeless cases, of people who are the strugglers of life: the poor in spirit, the meek, the persecuted. But it is actually a part of scripture that 'lifts the head' and focuses on a hopeful future.

***3 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

***4 Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.***

***5 Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.***

***6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.***

***7 Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.***

***8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.***

***9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.***

***10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

11 'Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

At the end of his earthly life, Jesus bowed his head. In John 19:30

... he said, "It is finished!" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Bowing the head in submission is not the same as bowing in failure. Bowing in submission is a positive action.

Submission is defined as: the action or fact of accepting or yielding to a superior force or to the will or authority of another person.

So, Jesus submitted to God, his father when he said 'Not my will but yours' when he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. The human side of Jesus knew the pain and cost. The deity knew that it was the only and necessary way.

Submission is also defined as: the action of presenting a proposal, application, or other document for consideration or judgment. Jesus did this when he died and rose again, presenting a perfect sacrifice that was totally acceptable by Almighty God.

We need help to 'lift our heads' and only by asking God through his Holy Spirit can we achieve this. Jesus bowed his head in submission so that he could defeat death and sin, and so he could ascend to his rightful place in heaven, seated in the place of authority beside his father, ready to hear our prayers and to one day present us before our creator and saviour. Philippians 2 describes powerfully how Jesus 'the lifter of my head' is now in his rightful place in heaven with his head held high.

Philippians 2:

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God,[a] he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen



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