

Coach House Church BEACONS

RISKY BUSINESS

8TH JULY 2020

I don't know about you, but the days at the moment just keep morphing into each other, with very little distinction between one day and the next.

Imagine being a robot that kept doing the same task, without deviation, over and over again, day in day out ... Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and repeat! It wouldn't be much of an existence would it? I'd like to welcome you to today's beacon. By all counts this is number 91 since we floated the idea of doing these devotionals to keep connected with each other in the lockdown.

I'm Andy and it was my privilege to present the first beacon, way back in March. This will be my 11th effort and I am grateful for the team that has engaged with this venture and shared the load along the way. I am amazed at the diversity and yet the connection between all the speakers and their messages. The number of beacons produced is akin to nearly 2 years worth of Sunday sermons! Pretty amazing when you see it like that!

It's a good job we are not robots, churning out the same style and message, one day after another. How boring would that be?

I often wonder why it is that God made us so individual, so unique and in some ways, so difficult to control. We all have our own ways of doing things, our own thought structures, our own desires, our own strengths and weaknesses. It would have been so much easier to make us obedient, programmed to do right - rather than wrong - but that isn't God's way. If you have children, then you will know that the greatest feeling is when a child does something out of love and obedience. It demonstrates - even in all the other frustrating episodes around this one moment

– that there is a relationship, a desire to love, from a deep emotional position. God wants us to have real love towards Him, real relationship, which is an expression of the heart. It would not demonstrate love if we were programmed and had no emotion or ability to do otherwise.

We have spoken before about the diversity within Gods church, made up of individuals and yet functioning with one purpose. Church is at its best when individuals are allowed to flourish to the benefit of the whole... and to think , this was Gods amazing idea to see us pulling together in a way which brings Glory and honour to Him and as it tells us in Ephesians chapter 4 v 10:

'Gods purpose is to use the church to display His wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places'

We sometimes forget that there is another dimension to our world – a heavenly one - and this scripture reminds us that the Church functioning correctly does much more than just show itself to be caring and effective in this world. The church is a constant reminder to Gods enemies that He is in control and that God has faithful people who will not blindly follow the easy path, that may seem easy and desirable, but ultimately leads to death and destruction.

The bible is very clear on this and Jesus told his disciples many times of this truth. For example, in Matthews gospel chapter 7 and verses 13 & 14, Jesus speaks to his followers and does not try and sugar coat the truth. He says:

'You can enter God's kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to Hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it'

Jesus is talking about Himself here. He is the narrow gate, but He also tells us that the way is hard. Jesus states it like this because it is true... it can be and is very difficult to find a course through this life with its temptations and its intent to deny God at every turn.

God has given us His word to serve a number of purposes. It gives us an understanding of Gods character. A character which does not alter or change, and is shown to be steadfast and dependable.

It demonstrates to us Gods plan for humanity. A plan to bring His creation back into a loving, safe, relationship with Him. This is clearly brought about by the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus – the only sacrifice able to cover all of mankind's sin and disobedience. Freely given so that all we have to do is believe and receive.

The bible also gives us good, sound advice on a whole range of issues that we are likely to come up against in our lives. From good foods to eat (and some to avoid!), to how to treat each other fairly and with respect. We don't always see it for what it is, because we are rebellious and don't want to read words that seem to constrain us ... the truth is though that actually the vast majority of the laws in the Old Testament, would give us a very healthy and satisfied life if we followed them. They are largely common sense and help us to avoid problems before they occur. It is a bit like a Risk assessment for life.

It seems nowadays that common sense is being eradicated from our cultures. As daft as it sounds, one company I worked for would send you on a training course on how to walk properly if you admitted to having slipped whilst on the premises! It all gets a bit ridiculous at times, but it is there to make sure that the company cannot be sued at a later date!

When we read the bible, we accept the risk that ignoring it may bring. It is now my fault if I disregard its contents or decide to go against Gods provision for me in Jesus. The risks are clearly laid out:

Separation from God – for all time

Death instead of life

Curses instead of blessing

Judgement rather than salvation – we Christians often use the phrase 'saved' to talk about our position with God – and this is what we mean by it – our relationship with God through the sacrifice of Jesus – saves us from what we deserve – judgement and Hell.

This all sounds very heavy and may even be putting some of you on edge, but God has made provision for us because we cannot do anything about it ourselves. The bible tells us the risks but it also tells us the Good news as well.

God has made a way for us to have a restored beautiful relationship with Him – the only risk for us, is that it will be a hard road to follow but the reward for doing so is eternal peace and life.

The Bible holds a plumb line up against our lives , you know the thing that builders use to make sure a wall is straight and true. The Bible shows us Gods standard and then contrasts it with ours – and we fall very short of making the mark- we are pretty wonky compared to Gods perfect love. If God is good and healthy then we are bad and very sick.

But Jesus again shows us the good news...

A couple of chapters on in Matthew from where we were before, in Chapter 9 verse 12, Jesus tells us:

'Healthy people don't need a doctor – sick people do! Then he added. Go and learn the meaning of this scripture 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices. For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners'

How prepared are we to have a good look at ourselves in light of what Scripture reveals us to be and then call upon the name of Jesus who gave His life to restore our relationship to God?

Now there's a risk assessment well worth taking!



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