

St Martins C3 – August 6, 2023

Permeate – Missions Month – “Learn Humbly”

Sermon Notes:

Bluebird Group is one of St Martins C3’s international mission partners. They work in Indonesia and have an amazing ministry that has reached many thousands of people with the Gospel.

Part of our partnership with them is recognising that, while we may have more financial resources than they do, we have a huge amount to learn from them in terms of effective missions. Our mission month series – Permeate – is focused on four things we can benefit from as we engage with what Bluebird Group are doing in their communities.

The first of these is to simply learn humbly from what they have built in partnership with God.

Read 2 Timothy 2:2 – 4

Bluebird Group is a *Disciple-making Movement*. Those who become followers of Jesus quickly turn their focus to leading others to the Lord. And they do it in a very difficult environment in Indonesia against considerable opposition! They have a strong focus on reaching people and one of the key things they do is to meet needs, and in doing so build relationships with lost people.

As Bluebird Group have done this – sharing their faith and meeting needs through building relationship – they have grown at an extraordinary rate, and they have an extraordinary vision that drives them forward. Their people want desperately to see people saved and brought into the Kingdom of God.

Our challenge is to ask ourselves if we really want the same. It would be the most wonderful and exciting thing to be part of, but do we really want this?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 – 20

All believers have been a role and a privilege in God's kingdom, which is to be his ambassadors and reach people wherever he has placed us. We need to fix our eyes on the vision of seeing St Martins be transformed by the Gospel and not waver!

Read Luke 9: 23 – 24

We need to be prepared to do our part as he works through us. We also need to understand the cost of doing so and ask ourselves if we are prepared to do what it takes to reach our community.

If we align our vision with God's vision, we can be part of something truly amazing here in St Martins. We need to *want to want what he wants!*

Questions for Connect Groups:

What stood out to you from today's message?

What inspired you about the work of Bluebird?

What could prevent us from learning humbly from those in the developing world?

How might meeting the needs of others provide the opportunity to speak the gospel?

What vision do you have for sharing the gospel? How could your vision for sharing the gospel grow?

Why would we not want to see a mission movement happen in Christchurch?

What would it cost us to align our vision with God's?

What can we do this week to see God's mission come?

Songs from Today:

Your Great Mercy, Battle Belongs, Jesus You Alone, Goodness of God, Give It All

Monday's Devotion – Courage¹

“While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep.” (Acts 7:59-60)

This week we are looking at what happens when we go out and love our neighbours. You might be thinking that starting with the death of Stephen is a pretty morbid way to start the week; however, we need to keep in mind that Jesus told us to expect opposition when we bring the gospel to others.

Stephen had done nothing wrong. There was a debate in the synagogue where many admired Stephen's wisdom and the spirit in which he was stating his argument. But those opposing Stephen, falsely accuse him of things that he didn't say (6:10-11). So, Stephen turns to God and finds supernatural courage to face death for something he didn't do. But Stephen's courage and sacrifice are a powerful witness to those around him.

None of us likes opposition, but we have to accept that Satan is opposing the spread of the gospel. We are in a spiritual battle. Taking ground off our enemy will be challenging at times, but it is what has to happen for the Kingdom of God to advance.

As we go out to love our neighbours this week, may we go like Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, full of courage and full of wisdom.

¹ Devotions this week were written by Ps. Warren Gouman. Thanks Warren!

Tuesday's Devotion – Miraculous Opportunities

“Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.” (Acts 8:5-6)

I love the way the Book of Acts simply describes what happens. Luke, the author, isn't hyping the story up; he just lays out the facts of what happened when the church started to go out and bring the Kingdom to the world around them.

Acts 8 describes some incredible opportunities that God opens up for Philip to minister to others. Many people are healed and delivered. A sorcerer turns from his wickedness, and an official gets baptised. Philip plans none of these situations. Philip simply makes the most of the opportunities that God opens up for him.

God will use our availability. We might like to know where that will lead us, but that isn't usually how God works. God asks us to trust Him first and then works ahead of us and around us to miraculously change people's lives.

I'm sure that Philip's faith was built up significantly through these encounters as he witnesses the power of God doing dramatic things in those around him. Likewise, let's make ourselves available to God and trust His lead as He opens up miraculously opportunities for us to minister His life to others this week.

Wednesday's Devotion – Bigger Vision

“Then Peter began to speak: ‘I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.’” (Acts 10:34-35)

When we go and love our neighbours, many good changes will happen in our lives. We will develop more courage. We will have the privilege of partnering with God in seeing miraculous change in other's lives. As we see in Acts 10, God will also enlarge our vision. God will reveal that our thinking is too small. God has a bigger vision in mind and is working on a much bigger scale than we can ever imagine.

This raises the important question of, *are you willing to allow God to expand your vision?* Peter was quite reluctant at first because it went against his previously held beliefs. Sometimes we need our way of thinking challenged. We need to think more out of the box than we do currently. We need a bigger vision.

What this passage reveals, and what history teaches us, is that mission is always on the cutting edge. Mission is by nature pioneering, not settling. Mission always raises new challenges like this because it is where God's Kingdom intersects with our ever-changing culture. It is this pioneering mission edge that leads to Kingdom expansion, and more people's lives changed. So, let us not become too settling in doing mission the way we have always done it. Let us be open to hearing how God is moving in our world today and allow Him to expand our vision to embrace what He is doing.

Thursday's Devotion – Clear Direction

“While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.” (Acts 13:2-3)

As the church prays together, God gives them a clear direction. God speaks to us as we spend time in His presence and make ourselves available to do what He calls us to do.

Many Christians I talk to would love to hear from God more clearly than they currently do, because we all know that hearing from God is powerful and life-changing. The problem is we want to hear from God on things that are to do with what we want, rather than what He wants.

When we look at examples in scripture and reflect on examples in our own lives, we find that God mostly commonly speaks to us regarding inner character change that He is doing in us or how He is leading us to reach the world around us. The example that we read here in Acts 13 is an excellent example of the second of these. God speaks clearly to those who are available to go on mission for Him.

Therefore, if we want to hear from God clearly, let us be willing to love our neighbour.

May you hear from God clearly today as you follow His lead in loving those around you.

Friday Devotion – It will get messy

“The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.” (Acts 15:12)

To appreciate the context of the verse above, we need to read the whole chapter of Acts 15. In it, we learn of an important debate in the early church at that time. The issue was, whether non-Jewish Christians needed to follow the customs and laws that Jewish Christians were following? What the issue is and what they decided is not the focus of this devotion. The main point is that they needed to have the debate.

As we go out and minister in Jesus name, it will get messy. We will have disagreements with other Christians. We won't always see eye-to-eye on everything. There will be the need to work our way through the issues that arise graciously.

I am sure that there was some passion expressed in this debate that we read about here, but it seems that they worked through the issue well and came to a godly solution.

We need to accept that mission will get messy. We will come across controversial things that we will need to work through. So, don't stress out when this happens. Accept it and embrace it. It is all part of the process. The important thing is that we show grace to each other and listen to God's voice speak through the process to lead us in the direction He is calling us to go.