

Matthew 12:15-21 **Why am I going to Ethiopia?** Fintry, 12/1/2014, am **Jesus: God's chosen servant**

Chat with the Children

- Act out Good Samaritan. Luke 10:25ff
 - series of 5 slides on screen; act out what happens for each image before moving on...
 - *Lord help me to make a practical difference in the world, like the Good Samaritan*
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Why am I going to Ethiopia?

- A week tomorrow I fly out to Ethiopia with Tearfund (map of Ethiopia slide)
 - been making lots of preparations, got my sunscreen and my insect repellent, had all my vaccinations... (show and tell!!)
 - had an orientation day, met the people I'll be travelling with...
- But why am I going?
 - I suppose I can answer at different levels...
 - know lots of folk who've been overseas, particularly to developing countries, who enthuse about the experience - "you should go if you get the chance"
 - had wanted to go and see some of the things we only hear about for myself - whether the work of Tearfund, or the worlds from which friends from overseas have come
 - have something of an opportunity following my dad's death....
 - considered Peru, Uganda, China, Nepal....
 - spoke to Tearfund and there seemed to be a fit...
- **But there is something far more fundamental:**
 - its not about me, or about Tearfund, or about the people and projects I'll be visiting
 - its about God
 - about who he is, and what difference he makes to the world and to me in that world
- Why should I care about Ethiopia? Or Syria or Iraq or Central African Republic or South Sudan or anywhere else for that matter?
 - do I only care about China because that's where Gerard and Sarah have been working?
 - or Peru because it is Edwin's home?
 - or Nepal because Amanda is there just now?
- And why should you care about the SHGs in Ethiopia which through this trip Tearfund hope you and others across Scotland will support?
 - why should we even care about what happens to folks around us, here in Dundee, who get into difficulties, who perhaps seem to bring trouble on their own heads?

God made us

- We have the dignity of being made in the image of God, with all his potential he has placed in us to steward creation
 - whole of Scripture has this underlying, powerful, potent assumption - explicit in the Genesis passages of creation and elsewhere, but everywhere the underlying assumption, the foundation...
 - life, our own life and the lives of others, mean something
 - they are not just chance happenings, ephemeral, passing, insignificant...
 - size of the universe - the atheist sees that and might despair... someone who knows God sees that and senses wonder!

God cares for us

- Gentle, not breaking a bruised reed, not snuffing out smouldering wick - looking out for those who are weak and vulnerable:
 - God is bothered!

God entered into our world

- Cared so much he entered our world
 - Isaiah passage is a promise of God's intervention, a promise of his very personal presence...
 - and in Matthew's account the point is that this promise is now fulfilled in Jesus

God brings justice and hope

- And the promise is of God's intervention to bring justice, righteousness, hope
 - connect to stories of injustice here and in Ethiopia...
 - how can I face, respond, want to help in the face of those stories?
- Because God made you
- Because God cares for you
- Because God entered into the world, and all its sin and suffering - indeed died for you
- Because God gives you hope and justice

Conclusion

- SHGs (*image*) bring hope because they work with people so those people begin to see their own worth, bearing the image of God, because they reflect the care God has for people, even entering the world, and because they work practically to bring hope, a future, and justice - that people are treated with the respect and justice they deserve
- In terms of Ethiopia I know it in theory - and I want to go and see it in practise
 - here, I know some of your stories of God bringing hope and transformation and change in your lives and situations - some stories I can tell, and some I can't
 - here I also know that there are still chapters unwritten in people's lives, chapters of more hope, more justice, more change in those who have already seen God at work in their lives.... as well as chapters in the lives of those who have not yet seen clearly that God cares for you, and has justice and hope to share with you...
- Pray for me as I go... that I will see and be able to share those stories
 - but also pray for one another, that here in our midst God would be crafting stories of change and transformation as Jesus is at work - of justice, of hope, of new beginnings, of relationships restored, of addictions cured, of neuroses dealt with, of tempers tamed, of hospitality given, of patience and grace grown...