

- Mission Series #5

Introduction

- I don't know whether you're aware of this or not, but over the past century or so there has been a fairly important division between churches:
 - on the one hand there have been those who have thought of evangelism **merely** in terms of preaching, proclamation, all to do with the soul and little to do with their earthly or bodily needs; faithful to Scripture, in terms of what Christ's sacrifice was all about;
 - *(image: body/soul separate)*
 - by contrast, another grouping have been heavily influenced by liberal theology, which reinterprets a lot of what the Bible says, and has at times reduced the Christian gospel to living this side of death.
 - this latter group have at times interpreted Jesus' commissioning of his disciples solely in terms of showing love and care today, of healing the sick, of caring for those in need, of challenging injustice in the world
 - in doing that they have often put those parts of the church who have stayed faithful to Scripture to shame...
 - for their practical demonstration of love in Christ's name has often been impressive
- At times each "side" suggested that "their" way was right - and they were both wrong!
- For we need to follow Jesus - who held both dimensions of a life lived in obedience to God together:
 - he spoke clearly, never failing to call for commitment, pointing to his death on the Cross as the sole place where reconciliation with God is achieved, and he spoke to challenge lifestyle;
 - yet at the same time he **loved unstintingly**, and often without direct response
- His perspective is summed up in the passage we read from Luke chapter 4 earlier on:
 - in many ways Jesus' own Mission Statement, or Purpose Statement.

Helping CAN be Evangelism

- We don't have a purpose statement:
 - congregation in Motherwell did.. *(put it up)...*
 - you may notice the desire to split things up...
 - but this purpose, this mission purpose part of what we are about as a church, can't be tidied away into a box that doesn't affect all we do
- Rather, there is a huge degree of cross-fertilisation between each of these aims.
 - mission crosses all neat divisions, encompasses all of our lives
 - *(image: body/soul together)*
- Do everything in Christ's name - that speaks of Jesus!!
- In passage in Luke, Jesus has just been filled by Spirit:
 - he is starting out on his ministry in God's strength, not his own;
 - as we do the same, go in the power of Spirit of Christ, not simply out of common humanity, then it has power.
- Will provoke the "WHY?" question in people's minds - why are you doing this?
- Because of Jesus Christ - because he loved me first, because he has sent me out, because he also loves you and values you....

Ways in Which we can Care

- How can we reach out in Christ's name?
- Some are just things we could do - others are ideas of the kind of things we might do, not definite suggestions!

Disasters

- TEAR Fund disaster response team in Haiti....
- long term preventative projects, development - maybe by prayer and finance,

maybe by going!

National

- Supporting work done in our name, eg through the Church of Scotland's CrossReach, or Salvation Army Homelessness work, or Eagles Wings, or...;
- residential care for elderly and children;
- drugs and homelessness projects;
- standing up for Christian values in society through reports (eg CARE)

Community

- for some of those you could get involved, volunteer with Andy Burns and his team, or ROCK night club outreach, or Hot Chocoloate, or whatever...
- or as a congregation supporting and getting involved in what is going on in our own community - Fintry Forum, hall lets...

Local

- Visiting elderly/lonely - I come across situations where someone calling to talk, and going in Christ's name, would be valuable;
- Summer Focus - cafe, place to chat, toddlers, etc - seeing always the chance to build relationships, to offer folk in the community a service in a Christian atmosphere (not simply a hall rental fee...!);
- we as a church might become aware of issues that are causing problems in the local community - there are times when the church's voice can help, when those of individuals would not be heard;
- we might need to learn to open our eyes to the needs around us and creatively find ways of helping... places for youngsters to go in the evening, places for older folk to go during the day, play-groups for mums with young kids.
- These are all evangelism - when done in Christ's name, and with a readiness to speak of him as the occasion arises!
- Jesus' eyes were open to the needs around him, and he met those needs at all sorts of different levels:
 - he brought freedom to captives - freedom from power of sexual sin (Samaritan woman), or the power of possessions (Zacchaeus);
 - physical help & healing - any of the healing stories, provision of food for the crowd, safety in the storm on Galilee;
 - confronted oppression - most often by the religious rulers of his day (debt? loan sharks? poor housing provision or unfair benefit rulings?);

The Year of the Lord's Favour

- Last note which Jesus struck with his audience in the synagogue in Nazareth, and note that he struck throughout his ministry was to "[proclaim the year of the Lord's favour](#)".
- OT background of Jubilee!!
- Note - this is where Jesus stops his quote from Isaiah, even though it goes on to talk of judgement - he has come to bring good news!
- God is good, loving, merciful - now is his goodness poured out - now is freedom and recovery happening - now is it seen how much God loves you - God's favour!
- That's what drew the crowds - the warmth and love, the gentleness and integrity, the acceptance and the honesty of Jesus!
- Yes, we need to talk of sin and wrong, and work for higher moral standards - but Christianity is not merely about morality!
- Jesus came because the Law, which made those things clear, wasn't enough - it didn't get you anywhere in any ultimate sense - only way God could change things was by GIFT of son & salvation.
- So let us speak of the value God places on individuals - and demonstrate it in our lives, as individuals and as a congregation:
 - to neighbours, visitors, whoever...
 - this is the year of the Lord's favour - whatever the circumstances they face in this sinful, fallen world - God cares, God accepts absolutely - and can make an eternal difference.

