

Introduction

- All familiar with compass to guide us:
 - how does a compass work - sets the direction
 - once you know that you can take the local and particular decisions on how to navigate the terrain in front of you
- That's a nice image - but what does it have to do with real life?
 - we all have to navigate life, the terrain that comes up in front of us
 - and quite often that terrain is bumpy - life can be hard - family situations, money worries, job pressures...
 - at other times the path is unclear - its not so much that the way before is hard, its just we can't see our way, we don't know which direction we should take - move job or stay? Study this or study that?
- We all have values that help us navigate those decisions
 - values are things that are important to us, and therefore shape how we decide
- Let me give you an example:
 - the phone rings - you answer it - its a salesperson
 - or the doorbell goes, and there's someone at the door
 - what's your reaction? Why?
 - that's a value that has changed over the past 20 or 30 years, probably as a result of a freedom being abused by companies trying to sell us things!
 - we value our privacy...
 - we are suspicious of the motives of others...
 - (as an aside, this change in values is one reason why door-to-door evangelism is very much less effective than it once was - the gospel hasn't changed, but the way people hear it has!)
- The compass we are using to navigate the decisions we make as we open the door or answer the phone - where has that come from?

Series called: "That's Tricky"

- series on areas of life that can be difficult to navigate
- either because they are painful, difficult for us to work through - the terrain is bumpy!
- or because the path is not clear - where, perhaps, different people say we should do different things - different Christians say we should do different things...
- for instance: **how do we deal with family lives that don't fit the happily married couple with children Christian ideal?** With partners or children who are not Christians? With members of our family who reject outright traditional ways of living - not getting married before setting up home together, or any of the other plethora of decisions that we find hard to take?
- or what about ourselves as a Christian fellowship? We've inherited a set of values about how we use our halls, for instance - **no drink, no smoking, no gambling, no lottery funding.** Values that those around us think increasingly bizarre - if we are to meaningfully engage with our community, should we put to one side some of those values to gain funding to make something good happen?
- My hope in looking at these things is that we bring our faith and our lives together, even in areas that are hard, tricky....
 - and we start by **setting our compass** for navigating these often troubled waters

What is our Compass?

- Paul is navigating troubled waters with the Philippians:
 - an area of contention amongst Christians in the 1st century
 - what part did their Jewish heritage play in their new-found Christian faith?
 - for some were saying that the OT said only Jews were eligible for salvation.... and so, to receive forgiveness through Christ you needed first to become a good

Philippians 3:1 - "That's Tricky: What's our compass?" Entry, 17/4/2005, am

Jew

- this was a dividing issue, an issue where many who seemed to be Christians had different opinions
- this issue in particular was a salvation issue, critical to our faith (not all, by any means, of the issues we'll be looking at are so fundamental to our faith!)
- and so Paul fights this suggestion - hard! (v2: dogs, mutilators of the flesh - that's circumcision!)

What is Paul's compass?

- how does he decide....?
- his compass, his prime direction, is taken from Christ:
 - *...the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...* (v.8)
- From this he navigates the troubled waters of the conflict with the Judaisers:
 - for it is in light of the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ that he is able to count all his advantages - including his Jewish heritage - as rubbish, trash
 - his compass, by which he assesses the other things in his life, is knowing Christ
- Notice how supreme Christ is:
 - this was everything - not just his religious observance, which was second to none - but everything he could do or have for himself...
 - his great intelligence, his very national and religious identity, the protection and status of being a Roman citizen in the great Roman Empire at the height of its powers... everything was loss.
 - (not just written down to zero, but counted as a loss!)

Why was he able to do that?

- Because Jesus Christ was infinitely better. Because what Jesus had done for him all he had in himself look like dirty rags in comparison.
 - Vague recollections of Physics lessons in school - they'd be trying to impress upon us the relative sizes of things in the Universe.
 - typically, it would go something like: Sun = football, centre of a pitch the size of Glasgow, and the earth is a ball-bearing a mile from the sun!
 - Comparisons in scale were so immense we couldn't really take them in!
 - That's Paul's situation here:
 - he has met the risen Christ, he has understood the value of his shed blood, of his death on the Cross to take away his guilt
 - and in comparison with that, all the rest is utterly insignificant
 - he now knows the most wonderful, beautiful, holy, awesome, perfect Saviour - and the whole of life now centres on Him!
 - Many of you will have experienced the joie de vivre, the thrill, of new found romance:
 - how everything in life seems to take on a new sparkle, a new vitality... and how it all centres on the object of our affections!
 - no length is too great to see them, to spend time with them...
 - everything else - jobs, plans, family - takes on a new perspective
- So Paul navigates life in light of his relationship with Jesus Christ**
- in light not just of what Christ has done for him - which could be at a distance, a mere shopping transaction
 - but in light of his relationship with Christ - eg fellowship of sharing in his sufferings (v.10) - he in us, suffers when we do, we are in fellowship with him in our suffering!

Conclusion

Arthur's Seat Story of me lost in Edinburgh!

- Knowing Christ means spending time with him, becoming more like him:
 - on holiday I was reading, and one paragraph in "Growing Leaders" by James Lawrence was really helpful (p.80)

Philippians 3:1-11 - "That's Tricky: What's our compass?" Entry, 17/4/2005, am

- Let's start this series by seeking to make Christ our compass:
 - (7) *But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. (8) What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ (9) and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. (10) I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (11) and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*
- Prayer... Helen lead into songs