

Jesus' Last week: Changing circumstances

Have you ever been to a music concert or a festival? I went to Champion of the World Christian concert at Wembley in 1997. 20,000 plus Christians praising, worshipping and praying to God together in one place. It was electrifying. Our hearts sang with passion, the joy overflowed as we met together with God. On the train home the praise and worship continued. Passions were high with joy brimming over. At each station new passengers met with this enthusiastic joyful excitement. The gospel was enthusiastically declared to this captive audience.

For three years Jesus had grown in popularity. 5,000 men plus women and children would flock together to hear Him speak. Passions ran deep; overwhelmed by His teachings and miracles. "Could this be the promised one?" Excitement overflowed, everyone enthusiastically shared what they had heard or witnessed, more people came. Finally, Jesus was about to enter Jerusalem. The prophesy was about to be fulfilled. The crowds rejoiced. The air was electrifying, joy overflowed.

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest!"

Read Mark 11:1-11

We never seem satisfied. Always wanting the next best thing. Throwing out the old for the new. What were the trends when you were growing up? Growing up through the 70s, you would find me playing French Skipping in the school playground. Being a teenager in the 80s, fashion became extremely important where leg warmers, shoulder pads and large plastic earrings were my must have fashion accessory. I don't think children today would know what French Skipping or leg warmers are. And large plastic earrings! What were we thinking?

Jesus had been the new trend, the next best thing. But within a week Jesus was alone. Where were the crowds? What happened to all that hyped overflowing passion? Where was the praise and worship?

Jesus is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. What must have hurt the most was that He was betrayed by one of His most trusted disciples. However, the knife of mental and emotional pain twisted even more as everyone (the crowds and his close companions, the twelve) deserted Him and fled.

It is the closest people to us, the ones that we trust, the ones that matter, that can hurt us the most. Jesus suffered more than physical pain.

Are you carrying the pain of a trusted close partner/parent/friend/child who hurt you? Jesus knows what you are going through. He understands the pain.

Spend a moment telling Jesus how you feel. And ask Him to show you how to forgive and find healing. You probably will not forget the situation, but the pain can be healed.

Read Mark 14:32-15:15

Peter

Peter follows at a distance. But he is conflicted. He was motivated and bold enough to go into the courtyard of the High Priest, to sit with the guards. And yet, he was not bold enough to declare that he was a follower of Jesus. Why was this? Are Peter's motivations and conflicts different to Judas' betrayal?

Can you see similar motivations and conflicts in your life?

For most of us, it is easy to declare Jesus when in a crowd like when I was on the train on my way home from the Christian concert. A popular quote states '*There is safety in numbers.*' But on our own? To be a witness for Christ in our day to day life, on our own, is a challenge.

Following Jesus in 2020 is not a trend. How much does the Church allow trends to influence our message and witness? How much do we compromise?

I am reminded of Jesus' words to His disciples while they were falling asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane. I am thankful that Jesus knows our motivations and conflicts. He gives us the answer to the problem:

***Mark 14:38 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.
The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."***

I encourage you to take some time here in prayer. Bring your motivations and conflicts before God.

Ask Him to show you circumstances where you have been tempted to be ashamed of Jesus, to compromise your faith or to deny Him. As you are reminded pray for forgiveness, seek His grace and know His love.

With knowledge of His forgiveness and love, praise Him. With thankful hearts pray that you will not fall into temptation again.

Ask Him to make you strong in Him and teach you how not to listen to wrong motives or be conflicted in doing the right thing for Him.

Jesus

Jesus is brought before the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jews. The Romans gave the Sanhedrin considerable authority, but they could not sentence anyone to death. Mark 15:9 tells us about the wrong motives of the High Priests. They were envious of Jesus. Out of envy they

tried to bring people forward with false testimonies so that they had the evidence to hand Jesus over to the Romans so they could sentence Him to death. But to no avail. Therefore, having taunted Jesus, they took Him to Pilate who was the Roman Governor of Judea.

Mark 14:61-62 "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus, "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Mark 15:2 "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate. "Yes it is as you say," Jesus replied.

How does Jesus respond to the betrayal and to the trial?

What traits or actions of Jesus are an example to us? How does He want you to respond when being accused and on trial for your faith?

We might not be suffering persecution, but many people around us are fearful, angry and hurt because of Covid19. How does Jesus' example, and the Bible as a whole, help you in your response and answer to them? It will be worth reflecting on this over the coming weeks.

Jesus is full of courage, trust and confidence. He stands in stark contrast to those who had abandoned and rejected Him.

He had surrendered His all before God in the Garden of Gethsemane. He now willingly accepted the path God was calling Him to walk. He trusted God completely for this plan upon His life.

He did not need to justify Himself or panic. He knew who He was, God's Son, the King of the Jews, the promised Messiah. He trusted and waited upon God, the Father. Therefore, He remained relatively quiet. The only words He spoke were words of truth, knowing that the words would lead to His death. Death! God's plan for His life.

A period of changes

In just a week Jesus was no longer the King of popularity. The voices no longer sang ""Hosanna!" However, in just three days all was about to change again. A small group of people were about to have their lives transformed forever and the church was born where praise, teaching, prayer, communion, community, witnessing and helping others were to be part of their daily lives (Acts 2:42-47) just as Jesus had taught them.

During this time of the Coronavirus the Church is scattered but not separated. Phones, computers and the Royal Mail keep us connected. We are being forced to be church in the community. What does that look like? How can we have all the elements that are important to church life – praise, teaching, prayer, communion, community, witnessing and helping others – whilst scattered within the community?

The Church is working this through. Ultimately we must ask ourselves what does God want for the World, the Church, England, Boyn Hill Baptist Church, and for ourselves?

Please spend time this week reading and praying through the last week of Jesus' life, be open to the Holy Spirit to show you the answers to the questions raised in these thoughts.

What is God saying to you? What is He wanting to teach you? Maybe you will find more questions. That is ok. Keep reflecting, reading and praying. And share your thoughts with each other. Together we grow.

Prayer

Lord, you are worthy of all our praises. You are the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords.

In this period where the Church is scattered will you be Lord over the whole Church. And be Lord over my life.

Show me where I need to allow you to bring healing and transformation so that I can play my part in this period of change.

Lord, teach me your ways.

***Matthew 6:10 "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven."***

Amen