

Our Church's Mission, Bring, Equip, Serve, Glorify!
Sunday, 10 April 2005
Matthew 28:16-20 & Luke 24:44-49

Scene 1.

What does it mean to you to be sure that you will spend eternity in heaven?

Is it something that brings you peace? Or is it something that you really don't think about all that often? The hope of eternity and resurrection is a central aspect of Christianity. After all if there were nothing else, why would anyone bother to believe?

On Friday night I watched the funeral of Pope John Paul the II. I was astonished by the size of the crowds in the days leading up to his funeral. And as I tried to understand what it was that drew people to celebrate the life of a man in such an astounding way I realised that John Paul the II was a man who dealt in hope.

It was this that he shared with humanity. For many it was the hope of freedom from oppression as his moral leadership bought pressure to bear on communism. For many others, the outcasts and the disabled, it was the hope of being accepted as a valuable human being. For many it was the hope of making the only form of Christianity that they knew relevant.

Even though there were so many things in the funeral service and in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, which I just can't justify from the Bible, central to John Paul's message was hope in Jesus as Saviour. And what did we see in Rome on Friday night? The largest funeral in modern human history!

Yes. But more than that we saw people honouring and giving thanks for a man who bought hope. And just as the testimony of John Paul's funeral was that he was sure of his place in eternity so to should we be.

Did you know that Frank Sinatra is reportedly to have once asked John Paul if he could assure him a place in heaven if he gave half his wealth to the church? Wisely and correctly the Pope told Frank that he couldn't.

You see the only way to guarantee a place in heaven is not to try and earn it or buy it because you can't. It is to accept that you don't deserve to be there and accept God's free offer of salvation through faith in Jesus.

It's that simple and so incredibly meaningful.

Scene 2.

If being sure of eternity is so meaningful why aren't the churches between Wamuran & Kilcoy full?

There are 10 000 people in the Stanley River Valley. But apart from the Mountain Top Fellowship at Mt Mee all the other churches report only about 25 people in their services. That means in total less than 250 in Church in this region on a Sunday. Now if being a Christian brings so much meaning and significance and a real sense of hope for eternity.

Why aren't the churches full? The scriptures are very clear. Forgiveness and Salvation is found in Jesus Christ.

We read in Acts chapter 4 verses 8 to 12 when Peter & John appeared before the Jewish rulers.

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.'" (NIV)

There is only one way to heaven it is through a living relationship with Jesus as Lord. God's heart breaks

for those who don't know him! No one has to be lost! But why is the message about Jesus so readily rejected?

Scene 3.

Is it that people just haven't heard the message of the gospel in a way that they can understand? Or is it that we haven't known how to tell them? I believe that it is both.

To often we are talking a foreign language. People know very little if anything about church and often they have all sorts of preconceived ideas from what they see on TV.

Basically I have found that if you take time to hear where a person is really at and what their needs and hurts are; it is relatively easy to show them how doing things God's way could be of benefit to them.

At other times when we do gather the courage to talk with people about our faith we just don't know what to say. Or we are so scared of making a fool of ourselves and being rejected that we don't say anything.

Now I know that some of you are sitting there right now saying, "Well it is easy for you to talk to people about Jesus, you're the pastor, and it's your job!" And to some extent you are right. But as individuals and as a group who is involved in the formation stage of a new church we need to build a culture where sharing our faith with people is natural.

So how do we do it?

Scene 4.

The answer is relatively simple but it does require effort!

Jesus gave us a very clear and simple set of instructions.

They are found in Luke chapter 24 verses 44 to 47 and Matthew Chapter 28 verses 16 to 20.

And when you put these two passages together it happened like this.

Matthew 28:16-17

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

Luke 24:44-47

44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.

Matthew 28:18

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Luke 24:49

49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

We read in Luke 24 verse 47 and Matthew 28 verse 19 that our role as a church and as individuals is to bring people to Jesus. To go out and make disciples, not to sit and wait for people to come to us.

We read in Matthew chapter 28 verses 19 and 20 that a key part of bringing people to Jesus is to equip them to actually teach them how to live a life of obedience to his commands.

And when we turn over to Luke chapter 10 and verse 27 we find out how we are to make all this happen.

Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"(NIV)

We are to serve our neighbour. That way they see Jesus at work in us. We don't all have to be a

professional Christian. We don't all have to be gifted evangelists. We all have to love our neighbour and then we can introduce them to friends who can talk to them about Jesus. Then we can invite them to things with others who know Jesus.

Then they will trust us to not abuse their trust, but to be honest with them about how we are sure of eternity. Jesus even promised us the power, the enabling; to bring people to equip people to love people.

He told us in Luke chapter 24 verse 49 that the Holy Spirit would come and fill us with power to do God's work.

It is simple.

God's name is glorified when people come to him and are equipped to serve and bring others. It only happens when we simply accept the promise of the Holy Spirit and allow him to help us love God and love our neighbour.

Scene 5.

Jesus' death & resurrection gave us salvation and the power to spread the message of salvation.

In Light of what we have been saved from, surely our response must be to bring salvation.

Examples

Rick Warren started with nothing. Just his family. He didn't even have a place to live when he drove into Orange County in California. He just met people and started. Now the largest church in USA (20 000 + each Sunday) and leading pastor in the western world.

Doug Drinnan, owner of Caloundra City Motors. Started with just his family in his lounge room. GoodLife Church is now one of the largest churches in the state. Huge community sporting facility, indoor courts, pool, enormous ministry on the Sunshine Coast.

God gave us a job to do.

It is to bring people to a living relationship with Jesus, equipping them to serve the community and each other with love so that God's name is glorified.

Let's do it!

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