

Mark 6:6b-13

12th August 2018

Richard - Intro

As we have tracked our way through Mark's gospel, we've seen what it means to follow Jesus. It's so easy to turn following Jesus into a list of dos and don'ts isn't it. We must do this and never do that.

With those things that are hard to do or to stop doing, we settle into believing that, over time, these struggles will get easier. We think that as we learn more, a day will come when it will get easier. We just mustn't stop trying. We read books. Go to bible study. These are good. None of this is wasted. God honours it all. Yet we find those things do not make it any easier, or at least the progress seems small. The doing and not doing remain the same challenges. We keep therefore remind ourselves that we mustn't stop trying.

May I suggest that there is another way to think about what it means to follow Jesus. Its not thinking that it's only about filling our heads with knowledge. It's to think about it in terms of love. Straight away our hearts now become engaged. Do you know how loved you are? You are precious in His sight. Jesus freely died for you. That's your worth. You are very special indeed. Hard to rationalise all that, but it's true.

Jesus invites you to accept that He loves you.

We all have such busy lives so, for just a few seconds, let's sit in silence as we soak ourselves in that glorious truth.

In the light of that, I would like to suggest that following Jesus, being a disciple, is not about do or do not. Instead, I would say that to follow Jesus is to be invited by him to open our hearts to acts of love.

It is to firstly accept the good news of the Gospel. Gospel means 'good news'. Accept the good news of the good news. You are loved.

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. John 3:16-17

It is then to open our hearts to acts of love. How do we do that? Not easy! So much more comfortable and less demanding to keep this just in our heads isn't it. Which is why Jesus sends out the 12 here. Go and share the good news and that's all. If people don't want to hear, that's not your responsibility. Just shake the dust of your feet. That is a freeing act that Jesus gives them. It's not your fault if

they don't want to hear! Don't take that responsibility on yourself. What happened? As they gave love, they were blessed and transformed. We are too as, opening ourselves to God's acts of love, we follow Him by engaging in acts of love, passing on in word, action or both, the love we have received. We are blessed. We grow. Something else happens. Do you remember those words of the first video clip from the Hobbit we saw: the words of Gandalf to Bilbo, that if he goes on this journey he won't be the same? We are also more and more transformed by this process of being open to acts of love, as we give love and allow ourselves to receive it, both inside and outside our church family.

I am not the same as I was before I went to Fort Liard.

I have heard about the Truth and Reconciliation commission and read about it. I have heard talks about it but this woman (Pic of Jacqueline) explained the reality of truth and reconciliation and it's impact on the community and the children we were working with in a way that shoved it from my head to my heart.

So then, when I had a chat with this kid (a pic of AJ) and heard his story, it broke my heart.

Cathy and Karen

Richard - Conclusion...focussed on 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

So you have heard something of our experiences.

We thank you for your part. Whether in praying, encouraging, donating...thank you for being part of it. I'll write more soon, for it seems that Jesus has more than one trip to Fort Liard in mind for us but time will reveal His purpose for us.

Jesus invites us to be open to acts of love – to pass on that love of Jesus has for us, to others.

Why – because we have received this wondrous love from God.

2 Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ urges us on,
because we are convinced that one has
died for all

As we do so, we receive love and we are blessed,
transformed.

2 Cor 5:15 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a
new creation: everything old has passed
away; see, everything has become new!

Living as the new creation takes time. Through being open to acts of love, we become more and more of who we are in Christ. We are also healed too. We are all broken in some way and opening our hearts to acts of love helps us connect with our own brokenness, that Jesus might heal and restore us.

This changes the way we see others – as Paul puts it in verse 16

So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view

This then informs all we do: Mission projects, Foodbank, Messy Church – we don't do these things because we think we should, but because the love of Christ urges us on, mindful that all the recipients of these acts of love are people who Jesus loves as much as he loves us. Mindful too that, as we open ourselves, we are transformed.

All that applies to the Fort Liard trip also applies to the ICPM lunch next week. For those going, praying, donating, making sandwiches – we open our hearts to God's love and grow as we pass it on.

This is true for all of us every day. For all of us, each day – well, we are all ambassadors – wherever we are, whatever we are doing, with whoever we are with.

2 Cor 5: 20 So we are Christ's ambassadors;
God is making his appeal through us.

What does it mean to follow Jesus? Open your heart to acts of love...and see what he will do in and through you and our church family.