November 3rd 2019

Story about the battleship…

Perception is a funny thing eh. The captain, in this thinking, believed what that light meant and acted accordingly. Except, he was wrong what that light meant.

Perception, our understanding of what we see, what those things are and mean shapes how we act.

For example, what does the word righteousness mean?

Let’s illustrate it with the gospel reading this morning. We are told why Jesus tells. He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt:

But look – this man rejoices in who he is not.

‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people:thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector’.

Let’s take a step back. Does God want us to rob, to be adulterers, to behave in a way that is not loving, peaceful, patience etc? Of course not! Do we fast? Do we give a tenth of our income? This pharisee has sought to be obedient to God. From his perspective then, all is well.

But the problem is thinks that’s enough or that’s all that matters. He thinks it’s his righteousness that is enough. He has defined the meaning of righteousness in the wrong way.

Unlike the tax collector.

**13**But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’

He knew that righteousness from God is God’s gracious gift received by faith.

Jesus concludes: **14**I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

The pharisee understood ‘righteousness’ in the wrong way. Here Jesus is defining righteousness in a different way.

As disciples of Jesus we must let Jesus define what words means

Over the course of the last four years I have learnt something that I had not grasped before. Like the pharisee with his meaning of ‘righteousness’, we too can get confused what words such as disciple, church, mission, worship, stewardship, priest, evangelist, to name just seven words, actually mean for we have defined them ourselves and not let Jesus define them.

For example, church. It’s a building that we come to on a Sunday? We go ‘church’. What time is church? What church do you go to?

Where does our focus go? We focus on getting together on Sundays, the preparation for that, the pastoral care of everyone who comes, keeping the building maintained.

Through this understanding of ‘church’, what then is a disciple? Someone who goes to church.

What is mission? It’s inviting people to come to church.

What is stewardship? It’s getting the money we need to run the church.

Let’s analyse what we are doing here.

In Christendom the Church learnt to start all its thinking from a church-first viewpoint. For those of you who like ‘ologies’, the understanding of the ‘church’ is ecclesiology. So we often start with ecclesiology.

That then shapes on how we understand discipleship and mission.

Missiology

It shapes then our thinking of where we feel we most meet Jesus.

Christology

The problem is that is neither Jesus nor the New testament teaches that.

Instead, let’s start with Jesus. If in doubt always, always, start with Jesus. Instantly, things look different.

We look to see – what is Jesus doing? He is fully and always engaged in the Mission of God, the Mission given to Him by His Heavenly Father, a Mission revealed from the beginning of and throughout Scripture, and which is in fact the one unifying hermeneutic of Scripture, and a Mission which – most emphatically – includes us all.

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” John 20:21

I like to share this bit when we present the ID framework:

The Greek word for send is ‘apostolos’ – we are all the Lord’s Apostolos’

The Latin word for send is “missio”…

We are all the Lord’s disciples, who are apostolosed and missio-ed; we are missional; we are sent ones -

From *Christology* then our *missiology* is informed and defined by Jesus.

And from Christology, to a Missiology that gives us a purpose defined by Christ, His disciples learn to create a community, the Body of Christ, the Church. Our understanding of how Church works and functions, our *ecclesiology*, flows out of our understanding of Jesus and the Mission He has invited us to participate in.

So – Christology – Missiology – Ecclesiology.

Jesus defines what these words mean:

Disciple and Mission – those who follow and are sent to be a blessing in the ongoing mission of God.

Church is the body of Christ! Who is the Head? Not the priest but Christ.

What is stewardship then? What does that word mean when we start with Christology rather than Ecclesiology?

It starts with Jesus. We give in response to Him. His love and grace. All we have is from him.

All thing

Who is Jesus? He is our Saviour, Lord, Redeemer, Friend.

What does Jesus do? The Mission of God.

What does Jesus call us to do? Follow him!

Follow him how?

Show love – but that’s not nearly descriptive enough.

As the Father sent me so I send you – John 20:21

Apostolos – missio.

And, as people engaged sent into the world to be a blessing, who is Jesus?

He is the Head of the Church!

What is the Church?

The Body of Christ!

What then is stewardship?

Start with Jesus – not church!

What love and grace we have received.

We give out of love and gratitude for the love and grace we have received.

What is it we have been given? Gifts, talents, experiences. You are a gift from God, so that we, the church family can be more effective and fruitful.

1 Cor 12:4-6

We need you!!! Anything who thinks I have nothing to offer – think again!

Oh! And this includes the children!!

They are a gift of God and bring things with them from Him for us.

For what purpose does God give to his Body?

For the mission Jesus has called us to.

What about our money then?

All things come from you and of your own do we give you.

Stewardship then is giving back to God what we have been given.