

Coach House Church BEACONS

YOU CAN'T BEAT THE TRUTH

3RD NOVEMBER 2021

After 19 months of protecting the church with policies and safe working practices when we open the building, Covid finally hit the Jackson household in the last week or two. We are recovered from it now after spending the requisite time in isolation. I am thankful that the symptoms were mild and we recovered very quickly. Melanie and myself felt the love and support of the church family, offering to shop for us, delivering fresh made cake to the doorstep and picking up the phone to check on our welfare. I certainly felt the care and love of the fellowship as I am sure plenty of you out there have also felt in the time we have been battling this worldwide pandemic.

What is interesting is the amount of seemingly conflicting information that abounds in the world today. I suspect that Covid has brought things to a head, after all, battling an unknown virus which hit the world hard and unexpectedly, means that decisions have to be made that have never been done on this scale before. Only hindsight will tell whether world governments have got it wrong or right, but I believe what hindsight will tell us, is that some things were good and some things we could have done better. I'm afraid that is what life shows us time and time again.

The world which we inhabit, is far from the beautiful ideal that it was created to be. Man's mistakes and sin have brought the world to its metaphoric knees. Our rejection of God's plans and purposes have left us in a precarious position and the world's desire to push God's existence into question means that mankind's thinking has to be brought to the fore and all of our understanding is focused on self as a result. Strange though that when things go wrong, which they undoubtedly do, one of the first things man does is to blame a God they deny the very existence of!

The thinking in today's society brings with it extremes of opinion and also various social media platforms that give voice to all sorts of expressions. We seem to be completely given over to the open forums and the distrust of 'official' news outlets is at an all time high. Personally, I believe it is the desire of the news channels to keep in tune with the change in social media and our appetite for argumentative opinions that has driven the changes we see around us. All of this points to a world which is getting further and further away from its created beauty and stability. We are being taught to distrust authority and question everything which removes our own control.

This shouldn't be a surprise given that we were created under Gods authority and were given the responsibility to look after the world and all in it. We only had one rule and now mankinds, failure to show obedience has resulted in rules upon rules to keep us in check. No wonder we want to break free, however, breaking free in reality means coming under the authority of God and accepting the sacrifice of Jesus... after all scripture maintains that Jesus sets us free

Galatians 5 v 1

'For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.'

This yoke of slavery that Paul, who wrote this letter to the churches in Galatia about, is the return back to religiosity and rules that had been placed upon the people in order to pursue God. Practices such as circumcision were being pressured upon people, but their relationship with God is not based on these things, it is purely on the acceptance of Jesus – who sets us free from these rules and regulations. Our relationship with God is one of faith not works. We will want to do good works because of our restored relationship and the resetting of our minds.

One of the crazy signs of this world that comes from our own understanding of things is that we lurch from one extreme to another in order to find right solution. Look at politics here in the UK. We go from one extreme of government to another, swinging back and forth from fiscal to monetary policies – both of which when taken to extremes, bring hardship and problems. If only we would let God have control.

Actually, we see the same kind of thing in churches and Christianity as well.

The latest trends are copied across churches. Being influenced by well presented argument and easily accessible online content seems to have replaced our reliance upon Gods' word itself. The Bible has to be our reference tool for identifying God' heart and intent for us. We need to read it for ourselves, rather than rely on what others tell us it says.

It seems that our failure to know God's word leaves us open to the kinds of swings in extremes that we are so used to experiencing in the world outside the church.

And it doesn't stop there. The worlds appetite for encouraging free thinking and opinion (regardless of substance) also finds its way into our thinking. I suspect that it comes from our desire to be free from anything which is seen as restrictive upon us – but the reality is that we continue to tie ourselves up and we need an intervention to help us.

That intervention came in the shape of Jesus, who shattered all of the religious rules of the day and put the leaders in their place by exposing their misuse of control and authority. Faith in Jesus truly sets us free.

I'm just not sure we really want the freedom – because it means we have to take responsibility. Real responsibility, and it isn't good enough to just hide behind opinion.

In the Bible there are plenty of examples of the thinking of the day being challenged with the truth, not only by Jesus, but also by His followers.

In the book of Acts, which tells us of the history of the early church and how the followers of Jesus brought their new found freedom to bear. Jesus' followers were constantly called out in front of the religious leaders of the day.

In chapter 5 of Acts, the Apostles are arrested and put on trial by the high council. The story itself is quite spectacular with the apostles being freed from their prison cell by an angel and being told to keep telling the truth about Jesus in the temple. The words used by the angel are along the lines of ' go to the temple and give the people the message of life'
Jesus gives freedom and freedom gives us life!

The apostles do as they are told and when the court is convened later the guards have the embarrassment of having no prisoners to bring to trial – they had to go and re-arrest them at the temple and bring them to court!

Once in court the Jewish high council accuse the apostles of refusing to obey them and to stop telling people about Jesus, but the apostles simply restate their beliefs and argue that they must follow the will of God not men.

This results in fury in the court and the high council plan to have the apostles killed. However, there was a man present on the council called Gamaliel, who urged for some wisdom in the volatile environment.

Acts 5 v 38-39

keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!"

The high council heeded this wisdom and the apostles were eventually set free ... the rest is history! As they continued speaking the truth about Jesus.

The apostles experienced the reality of the truth setting them free!

My prayer is that we will allow the truth of Jesus to set us free. That we will delve into Gods word and understand It for ourselves.

Opinions have their place.....but they can't beat the truth.



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