

Brackenhurst Methodist Church: 12 April 2009
The Hopeful Follower: With Jesus in the Garden of Resurrection

Welcome & Notices

Scripture:

John 21:1-19

Message

INTRODUCTION

- I don't know if any of you have ever been on stage, playing a part, and you fluff your lines?
 - Some people are charismatic enough to improvise and carry on
 - I Like to be on stage, like the extroversion
 - But have to have a script (worship team knows that!)
 - * I'm not spontaneous, and so when I fluff I mess it up for everybody!
 - * And that is just the worst feeling, to be on stage, hundreds of eyes looking at you, and you have messed the whole thing up!
- But sometimes it feels like that in the way we live, doesn't it?
 - In his play "As you like it" William Shakespeare wrote "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances..." and so he goes on.
- Natasha Bedingfield:

"No one else, no one else
Can speak the words on your lips
Drench yourself in words unspoken
Live your life with arms wide open
Today is where your book begins
The rest is still unwritten, yeah"
- You and I are giving the task of living our lives, no one else can live our life for us.
 - We are players on the stage of life, writing the words of our stories
 - * Making up our lines as we go along
- But sometimes we fluff it up
 - And as followers of Christ, in spite of what we say we believe, we often get our 'lines' wrong.
- We say the wrong things, we write the wrong things and then we find ourselves in a place of despair, discouragement and hopelessness.

- A little bit like messing up on stage
- A bit like Peter in the story we read this evening, you know the background to the story (expand)
- You know that I like to speak about hope, and I want to suggest this evening that we can recover hope by rehearsing our lines!
 - You see, the better you rehearse and the more practised you are in the production, the easier it is not to mess up when the pressure is on
- So I want to suggest four lines that we can rehearse, four lines that we can take with us, four lines that can colour our lives
 - To give us hope, to encourage us, and help us to live more fully as Christ followers
- Four lines of two words each to fill our hearts and minds and spirits.
 - New Creation
 - New Celebration
 - New Commission
 - New Commitment

(1) New Creation

- Firstly, then, the story of Jesus appearing to the disciples at the Sea of Galilee, or Tiberius as it is referred to in this story, offers to us the line of “new creation”
 - You see, in spite of everything that had happened
 - * AS happens with so many of us
- The disciples — who had already met the resurrected Jesus — went back to the old
 - They’ve spent three years with Jesus, following him, learning from him, ministering with him
 - * And meeting him in his resurrected state and receiving the Holy Spirit (20:22)
 - In spite of that they go back to the old
- Back to the darkness, back to the night where we find them doing what they had done before Jesus called to them
 - James and John and Simon Peter and some others are together, and Simon says, “I’m going out to fish...”
 - * Sound familiar?
 - * I think we all do it
- And they all follow Simon into the night, but nothing happens
 - And they spend the night on the water and then early in the morning as the sun starts to rise

- At the start of a new day, Jesus stands on the shore of the Lake
 - The disciples went back to the old, but Jesus meets them at the start of a new day, a new creation.
 - * Jesus is the start of the new creation, a new world has begun.
- There's a song: Morning has broken, like the first morning
 - And indeed, there is a sense that this was the first morning for the disciples of Jesus
 - * This was the morning, not for the resurrection of Jesus, but for their resurrection
 - Particularly for Simon Peter who had betrayed Jesus just days before.
- So this is the first line that we need to learn:
 - When we mess up, when we get the lines wrong in Jesus Christ there is always a new creation.
 - * As far as we may wander in our broken states from him
 - he is always waiting for us on the shore, offering a new creation
- THIS is our gospel.
 - Wright: "Never at any point do the Gospels or Paul say Jesus has been raised, therefore we are we are all going to heaven. They all say, Jesus is raised, therefore the new creation has begun, and we have a job to do. What the New Testament really says is God wants you to be a renewed human being helping him to renew his creation, and his resurrection was the opening bell. And when he returns to fulfil the plan, you won't be going up there to him, he'll be coming down here."

(2) A New Celebration

- The second line that we need to learn is that Christ calls us to a new celebration, and often we don't realise that
 - We think that the gospel is all about work, really it is about celebrating
- As the disciples come in off the Sea, Peter wading through the water, the boat laden with fish
 - When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals here with fish on it, and some bread... and Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."
 - * Jesus has a meal ready for them, and what a wonderful act of love and grace
- Do you remember the last time they shared a meal together?
 - They were in the upper room celebrating the Passover
 - * Judas was yet to betray Jesus
 - * Simon Peter was yet to deny him

* Jesus was still to go to the cross

- All this has past, a new creation has begun and now once again the followers of Jesus are being invited by him to enjoy a meal together
 - To break from their meaningless labour of the night
 - And celebrate with a breakfast in the new light of day!
- This morning many of us were up very early to go and enjoy a sunrise service to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus
 - When I was in Benoni we did it a little differently
- We had our sunrise service on the Monday morning, and we'd go down to the lake on Sunday night after church and we'd spend the night around a campfire in our sleeping bags, sleeping for some of the time, cuddling for some of the time, singing, telling jokes
 - And not just young people, the whole community
- Then as the sun rose on Monday morning we would have a fish braai breakfast together remembering this story of Jesus meeting his followers at the sea of Galilee
 - and many would go home, but others of us would spend the rest of the day picnicking and celebrating.
- We are called to a new celebration
 - A meal changes the relationship again
 - * a meal expresses something new
- A new celebration of the new creation
 - So let's remember that in the new creation we are called to a new celebration

(3) A New Commission

- Then Jesus calls Simon Peter aside
 - The one who denied that he even knew him and Jesus now affirms him in his ministry
- He starts out by saying "Do you truly love me more than these?", and finishes by commanding him, "Feed my sheep".
 - And if you are observant in the NIV you will notice in this story that there is a word play between Simon Peter and Jesus
- Jesus first says to Simon, "Do you truly love me?"
 - Simon responds, "Lord, you know that I love you."
- And Jesus says, "Simon, do you truly love me?"
 - And Simon responds, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you"
- And Jesus says, "Do you love me?"
 - And Simon says, "You know that I love you."

- Three times Jesus speaks to Simon Peter about his love, corresponding to the three times that Peter denied Jesus
 - But more than that you will see that Jesus says “do you truly love me?” and Peter responds “Lord I love you”
- This English translation corresponds to two different words in the Greek.
 - Jesus says, do you agape me — do you love me unconditionally, and Peter responds, Lord I phileo you — I love you as a friend
- And then the third time Jesus says, “Simon do you love me as a friend?”
 - And Jesus meets Simon just where he is and gives him a new commission
 - * Peter was called out of the fishing business into the sheep business.
- Jesus doesn’t wait for Peter to mature into the kind of love that he has for him
 - He doesn’t say, well go back to fishing until you can also say that you love me unconditionally
 - * Jesus accepts him where he is and gives him a new commission
- We don’t have to have our lines right before Jesus will use us!
 - We are called by Jesus unconditionally out of the old creation, through a new celebration into a new commission

(4) A New Commitment

- The fourth line that I want to speak about this evening is a “new commitment”
 - It is in this acceptance of who we are and where we are that we are called into a new commitment.
- You will remember that right at the beginning of the gospel story Jesus called different people to him
 - And the first words that he spoke were, “Come, follow me...”
 - * And they did they in their own imperfect way
- If we think the first disciples of Jesus were perfect we really have misunderstood the gospels
 - They were people like you and me
 - * They made mistakes
 - * They were difficult
 - * They frustrated Jesus, he had to rebuke them numerous times
 - * They misunderstood what Jesus was about
- But constantly Jesus calls them from where they are to follow him on, to take the next step in the journey.
 - A little bit like taking a dog on a walk: first sniffing one thing, then another
 - * And you constantly have to encourage the dog to go where you want it to go.

- It doesn't stop you from loving your dog, or taking it on a walk again
 - Jesus is the same for the first disciples and for us
 - * He takes us on a journey from wilfulness into willingness:
- Now at the end of the gospel he speaks to Peter the same words that he spoke to him when he first called him
 - "Follow me".
- Jesus reminds Peter of the words he first spoke to him, and it is a call to choose: either follow Jesus or don't follow him.
 - It's a call that sounded to us today, as well
- So the fourth line that we need to remember when we are in danger of messing up our lines is this one
 - Christ calls us to a new commitment
 - * Constantly recommitting ourselves to the journey that Jesus calls us on

CONCLUSION

- The greatest enemy in our spiritual lives is the distraction of life versus the simplicity of the call.
 - One of the things that causes us to fluff our lines on stage is distractions
 - * Somebody gets up in the audience, or we see somebody we know
 - * Or somebody throws a tomato
- Distractions cause us to forget our lines
 - I hope that as we journey from this resurrection Sunday that we will remember these four lines that i have spoken about tonight
- A new creation
 - Christ's resurrection always promises us a new start
- A new celebration
 - Christ's resurrection always promises a life of celebrating the good in the bad, the glory in the shame
- A new commission
 - Christ's resurrection always calls us on to new ministries
- And a new commitment
 - Being called to commit ourselves to him again and again, even in the midst of heartache and pain and confusion
- May it be so for you, even as it is for me.
- Amen