

**Brackenhurst 15 February 2009 18h30**  
**Whose report will you believe?**

**Welcome & Notices**

**Scripture:**

Numbers 13:1, 17-33 & 14:1-4

Romans 10:1-18

**Message**

**INTRODUCTION**

- During the last two evenings as we've been on camp we've been looking at the theme of Revolution
  - And how Jesus call us on a revolution of love
    - \* You may have noticed that if you turn the second four letters of revolution around you get 'love'
  - And we've been saying that it is vital for us to undertake this revolution because the world as it is is not sustainable
- And so on Friday night we spoke about framing stories
  - We said that framing stories are the things that hear in society that help us to understand the world around us
    - \* Things like "You've got to work hard, earn as much money as you can to live a successful life".
- And then on Saturday night we spoke about systems
  - And especially the systems that the world operates under
  - We said there are three main systems, which all have many subsystems
    - \* The prosperity system which keeps the economy moving
    - \* The security system which protects people
    - \* And the equity system which regulates the prosperity and security
- In the middle the framing stories teach us how to operate as people within a system.
  - Ideally!
- The problem is that when we start hearing framing stories that are distorted, we start treating the systems incorrectly and so the systems start to break down.
  - So for example we listen to a framing story that says, "The goal of life is to accumulate as much as possible in as short a time as possible"
    - \* We start abusing the systems to do that

- So the equity system breaks down and instead of the prosperity system providing a good life for all it ends up providing a very good life for very few
  - And a very bad life for the majority
    - \* Then the security system breaks down because the poor majority feels that they also have a right to some of the prosperity system.
  - Ideally the poor should be getting wealthier, if the system works, if we listened to a framing story that said “there is enough for everyone, take what you need, but don’t be greedy”
- The reality is, and these are American figures, I don’t know if SAs are better or worse
  - In the 1960s the ratio between the best and worse paid workers, between executive pay, and people on the shop floor, was 12:1.
    - \* In other words the manager would earn \$12 000, and the worker \$1 000
  - In 2003 that difference had jumped to 300:1
    - \* Manager \$300 000, worker \$1 000.
  - That’s a big difference, and you can see how the systems are abused.
    - \* Of course the worker on the shop floor is going to say, but I also deserve a bit of that, and will take in one way or another
- You know that this cannot carry on indefinitely, apart from the security risks the reality is that the earth just doesn’t have sufficient resources to support that kind of prosperity.
  - And you probably know of the environmental crises we’re looking at with global warming and resources being depleted
    - \* Not to mention the economic crisis as the world’s economies collapsed last year
  - Experts can say what they like, but the cause is simply the the rich have been trying to get too rich and everything has collapsed.
- This is mostly what we spoke about on Friday and Saturday night, but I also noted something else about framing stories
  - While framing stories shape our lives as a global community
- They also shape our lives as individuals
  - We hear stories that shape who we are.
- Stories that tell us whether we’re attractive, whether we’re wanted, whether we good, or bad, capable or incapable
  - And the more we hear those stories they more we start to believe them
- Just like we believe the stories about our world that says we won’t be happy unless we earn obscene amounts of money.

- Out of all of this we said that Jesus Christ offers us an alternative framing story
- An alternative story in how to live our own lives knowing who we are, and knowing that regardless of what we may hear, and what others may say we are good and created in God's image
  - And an alternative story on how to live in community so that the systems work well for everybody.
- Tonight I want to offer you the opportunity to buy into Jesus Christ's framing story, and to do that I invite you to turn to Scripture with me:

**Scripture:**

Numbers 13:1, 17-33 & 14:1-4

Romans 10:1-18

- The story of Moses sending the spies into the land of Canaan is an interesting one
  - See, we've probably heard about the story before
- And we probably also know that the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years
  - But I'm not sure that we always know that these two stories are connected to each other
- But what really happens here is that we see the conflict of two different framing stories
  - One which is the story of the majority represented by 10 of the spies who go into the foreign land of Canaan
  - And another framing story represented by two of them, Caleb and Joshua.
- And this story takes place very soon after the Israelites have escaped from Egypt
  - Travel across the desert is a matter of weeks, certainly not forty years
- But they've travelled across the desert, and they stand ready to enter the land which God has promised to give them
  - Listen to what the situation is
- They are in a desert, they have no resources except what God provides — water from a rock and manna and quail
  - They have stood before God on Mt Sinai, covenanting with him to be his people
- Now he says to them, before you is the promised land
  - A land flowing with milk and honey
  - And land in which everybody will have enough
  - A land in which the systems operate well
    - \* Prosperity for everyone
    - \* Security for everyone

- And the spies go to the land of Canaan
  - And they come back and say this is indeed the land that has been promised to us
    - \* And they bring back this enormous bunch of grapes and other fruits to prove how plentiful the land is.
- So the first thing that I want to say is this
  - And I want you to hear it

### **(1) The promised land exists**

- The promised land exists
  - The promised land exists
    - \* This is what was promised by God and the people see it over the mountain
- So often I speak about different framing stories, and how we can live differently
  - And how we ought to live differently
- And people response is
  - “You don’t know how it is in the real world”
  - “You don’t know what it’s like to have a family”
  - “You don’t know what it is like to have to work for a boss.”
- They seem to think that I’m speaking nonsense!
  - But I want to say to you this evening that the promised land exists
    - \* There is a better way of doing life
- \There is a better way of being a community than what we have right now
  - And there is a better way of being human than toiling and grinding through the desert
- The promised land exists
  - It can be seen over the mountain

### **(2) The Promised land is there to enter into**

- The second thing that I want to say is that the Promised land is there to enter into
  - It doesn’t just exist as an ideal
    - \* But is there to enter into
- See, the spies, as they came back from Canaan said to Moses
  - We have seen what was promised to us
    - “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit...”
    - \* We have been there!
- Sometimes I speak of the Kingdom of God

- That's the message that Jesus brought that the Kingdom of God is at hand
  - \* It's there
- And more than that it is there to enter into.
  - The spies proved it. They went into the land and brought back its fruit
- But the people did not believe
  - That's what Paul says in Romans by quoting Isaiah: "Who has believed our message?"

### **(3) Whose report will you believe?**

- And that brings me to my last point for this evening
  - There are two different reports set before us
- But there are twelve spies who were sent into the promised land
  - All of them saw that the promised land exists
  - All of them came back and said that it is there to enter into
- But only two of them said we can do this thing
  - The other ten said this is too difficult, The giants are too big for us.
    - \* They are stronger than we are, the land devours those living in it.
- And because of the ten people who said it wasn't possible
  - Listen to this — the Israelites wandered around in the desert for 40 years!
- They didn't wander around because they were lost
  - They wandered around because they didn't have the courage to take possession of the land
- They could have entered the promised land that very day
  - But they had two different reports before them and they believed the wrong one
- Ten said it's a good land, it's a good idea, but realistically it won't work, they're too strong for us
  - And two: Joshua and Caleb said something different
- They said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we certainly can do it."
  - The Israelites listened to the wrong people, those who said it couldn't be done
- They listened to the framing story that said they couldn't change anything
  - they were just a bunch of slaves who didn't deserve good things
  - They listened to a framing story that said prevailing circumstances were more powerful than God
    - \* And they wallowed in their hopelessness and God said stay there for forty years until you've all died out and there is a new generation who is willing to believe in what I can do

- Now it seems to me that this is where we are today
  - We need to make a choice about whose report we are going to believe
  - About which framing story we're going to live our lives by
- Whether that's as a community
  - Or as an individual
- Are we going to live in the desert when we could have plenty?
  - Are we going to wander around for 40 years with the promised land just over the mountains?
- I don't know where you are tonight, whose report you've been listening to
  - What framing story you've based your life upon
- But I call you to enter the promised land
  - To take hold of the kingdom of God
    - \* To confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord
- I call upon you to recognise that the story which he invites us to be a part of is the one that will save us
  - That will set us free as individuals
  - And will save the planet from exploitation
- I invite you to confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that we can live in the promised land through Jesus Christ as our Lord
  - That your story and my story can be different
- If this is a decision you want to make I invite you to come forward to the altar this evening, whether personal, or whether community.
  - The scripture says, Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame...
- Not going to be easy, not about saying a prayer here at the altar tonight, but about making really changes in the way you live