

WELCOME 9th February 2025 – 5 Epiphany '25 C

Luke 6:17-26

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! Along with your worship order you have in your hands & Bible Study **Qs** that are able to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom** Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m. Link is on website...

As we move into this week...This morning we'll read **this** from Luke's gospel...

*When they came down from the mountain, the disciples stood with Jesus on a large, level area, surrounded by many of his followers & by the crowds. **There were people from all over Judea & from Jerusalem & from as far north as the seacoasts of Tyre & Sidon.***

Always gets me...people flocked from hundreds of kilometres to get close to Jesus. Those w/ specific wants, needs, or desire came in droves...sure...of course. But the curious/cautious/cynical came as well. Surveys tell us **THAT** hasn't changed. Even the indifferent/skeptical will entertain the idea of learning/hearing about Jesus & more than anything want to see that those who claim to follow him actually do.

God has called Living Water Fellowship

to be a vibrant Christian community that glorifies God

by inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus who grow in his grace and go in his power to show his love to the world

Called by God for God's glory...Inviting people into a life of living w/ Jesus as Jesus directs... Growing in likeness to him & being empowered by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave...obeying his command to Love others as he loved us.

"They had come to hear him & to be healed of their diseases;
and those troubled by evil spirits were healed.

*Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him,
and he healed everyone."*

The "why" for you/me...Living Water...**To** give the world a glimpse of Jesus... abundant life...restoration...forgiveness...generosity...reconciliation...joy...hope... contentment...peace...strength...courage...boldness.

If the world **AROUND** us can't see him **IN** us...where else will they?

If we don't invite them...who else will?

Christ dwells in you to be seen by the world!

Let's pray...and then explore & experience that together...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious Father apart from you we are nothing...and we deserve nothing of what you have provided. But you have provided for us in abundance & we praise you. Thank you for every year you have given us as a community of your sons & daughters. Make us worthy of your name and guide us by your Spirit. Fill us today with your power that the world may see in us your kingdom & your presence ruling over all we are and all we do. Let your grace be experienced and your glory extended among us & through us. Strengthen us beyond our imaginings & shape us to be the church you've always dreamed we could be...through Jesus Christ we pray...Amen.

Let's hear God's word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. If you had a chance to meet Jesus, why would you want to do so?
2. What might worry you about simply meeting up with Jesus like that?

5 Epiphany '25 C – ANSWERING THE “WHY?”: A GLIMPSE OF JESUS

My computer gave me **this** message this week. In a nutshell I need to update some of the operating software. You don't have to know what that means...I don't fully... except that like the “**check** engine” light in your car...if I don't address that issue, life will get...complicated. There was nothing wrong w/ the old system but like so much we know stuff was “updated...improved upon” & now I'm informed of the fix in a way that feels like **We** fixed something that wasn't broken but if **YOU** don't adjust it will be, & life will get complicated...difficult...confusing...unworkable.

John...it's like this... You're going to get mixed up more often. You can't trust what you've always done to get what you need done. What you've relied on for years...That's over. That sense of security... reliability...consistency...Poof! Gone! In their place...there'll be confusion...complications...disorientation...Things will get messed up...lost...I don't know about you, but I don't need out-of-date computer software to get to those places.

I reach confused/disoriented sometimes just watching the news...reading the paper or listening to conversations around the school...talking to people I know in town. I see life get complicated by a world that favours the proud & the powerful & forgets the vulnerable...those who will never quite fit the current mould. I see how messed up it is as my children grow to adulthood in a culture that esteems affluence, comfort & self-investment. I hear stories about Aussie families “doin' it tough” (*inflation house prices jobs*) but who seem to make life harder not easier for themselves. I see how unworkable it is how complicated our world gets when we're told to exalt/celebrate feelings over truth – that chaos & disorder are not to be challenged – that Biblical morality & Biblical wisdom are oppressive & are to be attacked & corruption condoned.

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by inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus...

In this world that broke what wasn't & fixes it worse than it was...we're not a novelty – historical artefact of a bygone era – a special interest group – a mine for votes or the emerging seat of earthly power. We're not just another spiritual expression in the market of religious providers. We live toward a specific goal...our lives as individuals & our living as a community of disciples...Christ's church in this city is purposeful... intentional...we live toward a clear “why?” - **To** give the world a glimpse of Jesus.

What's that like? Think about Jesus' 1st public sermons...his inaugural ministry moments...Mt/Mk record it similarly... **“The time promised by God has come at last!”** Jesus declared. **“The Kingdom of God is near! Repent & believe the Good News!”** – Mk 1:15 & Mt 4:17 Lk tells of Jesus in the synagogue reading from Isaiah's prophecy: **“The Spirit of the**

LORD is upon me; he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, & that the time of the LORD's favor has come.” Jesus announced that God's gracious rule is right here in him...that love & peace & joy & justice & restoration... all of what the Father originally intended for his creation to be are *NOW* & found only in him. *“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”* *Everything God intends...IN HIM NOW*

Don't miss this...it's momentous...Jesus assures his followers & whoever will listen that the world's values...it's operating system...how the world sees reality (achieve, acquire, accomplish, wealth, power, success, the latest trend or social contagion...) have been overthrown because he has come & intervened in history. God's values...reign... operating system has invaded/broken right now into our world...& ultimately wins.

Then what happens? We just read part of it...He heals everyone who comes close. He casts out demons. He befriends the losers & dregs of society. Calls to himself a band of misfits & outsiders & appoints them as apostles/agents of the very kingdom he has demonstrated...Jesus gathered around himself this circus array of laborers, loose women, & law-breakers & moved into their hearts & homes in a fellowship they'd never experienced before. Then when the crowds gather he does it all again: **They** had come to hear him & to be healed of their diseases; & those troubled by evil spirits were healed. Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, & he healed everyone.

He assembled this odd mob of dropouts, misfits, disasters, people you wouldn't let baby-sit for you & called them “friends.” He made God's love **FOR ALL** personal **FOR THEM** (lowly least lost lopsided)...& sent them out to live that love everywhere they went w/ everyone they met. **Just** as I have loved you, you should love each other. – Jn 13:34 Be me everywhere you go w/ everyone you meet. It's funny, read the gospels & the 12 look like they couldn't tie their own shoes much less live like Jesus...But in fact they were awesome...Acts chapter 4...Peter & John are in trouble w/ the religious leaders of their day & are on trial for sharing the good news of Jesus & healing a crippled man. They're called to give account of what they've done...they're on trial for their lives Acts 4:13: **“The** members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter & John, for they could see they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures (no seminary, no fancy courses). *They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.”* Best vaccine against pride? Ask: **if** I was on trial for my life – would I be guilty of looking like Jesus? Could I be convicted of hanging out w/ Jesus such that I resembled him? That everything about me made you think of Jesus? *ordinary men w/ no special training in the Scriptures...and doggone 'em every inch of 'em shouts Jesus.* Never forget...The church's primary agenda is **NOT** primarily Sunday morning...

P & J are headed into worship/prayer time but the healing happens in the street & their witness is in court...The church's primary agenda is expanding our web of relationships in our city so that *each of us* engage someone outside the family of Christ's disciples to invite them in. Jesus' **ONLY** plan for reaching the world w/ the good news of God's kingdom of restoring grace & forgiveness that comes to all creation through Christ's death & resurrection is what we see there. The only way the world's brokenness is mended, our hurts healed, our families restored & our children nurtured to faithful adulthood, enemies reconciled, or nations united in peace, love, & compassion for the good of the most vulnerable among us is...To give the world a glimpse of Jesus invite folks in...abundant life...restoration...hope...forgiveness...generosity...hospitality...joy... reconciliation... contentment...peace... strength...courage...boldness. To give the world a glimpse of Jesus...

If you were to walk the streets of our city...you wouldn't have to go far... you'd find scores of people not living in a daily relationship w/ Jesus who have no idea what church is; & aren't interested in church schemes, marketing, live-streams, & 'next cool thing,' but desperately want to feel loved, like they belong, have a reason for hope in this often hopeless world & lives have value/meaning/purpose. They'd love honest answers to their questions or just honest conversation w/ someone who knows the names of their kids & prays on their behalf & models peace hope strength when life gets rough. Who know the truth **"God blesses you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours. God blesses you who are hungry now, for you will be satisfied. God blesses you who weep now, for in due time you will laugh. What blessings await you when people hate you & exclude you & mock you & curse you as evil because you follow the Son of Man. When that happens, be happy! Yes, leap for joy! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. Remember, their ancestors treated the ancient prophets that same way."** God knows/cares/acts **FOR US**

Jesus says that the healing & blessing & favour of the Father are not about the circumstances or conditions **OF** this life but about our relationship to him **IN** this life. The world tells us that it's the rich, self-satisfied, happy, & popular who are blessed. Jesus says **YOU** are blessed no matter what external conditions prevail in your life, because it is God, & not the world, w/ the final word about who you really are & **HIS WORD** assures you healing & blessing & favour of the Father are yours because you are the crown of his creation...the object of his love & desire...He offers you life that never ends...irrespective of circumstances.

God blesses & holds secure those who understand they are spiritually bankrupt & have nothing to give to God as a bargaining chip for God's favour. God blesses those who hunger/long for God's will & God's way to be accomplished & have no confidence in their own ability to make it happen...who have no thought that they

can fix the world & the people around them. God blesses those who are hungry because if you're hungry, you're can go to the One who is a feast...If you're hungry for those things you can approach the One who described himself as the bread of life...who offered himself as the source of satisfaction for every hunger & every thirst. If you're hungry for those things then pursue Him remembering Jesus came for sinners not for those who think they are righteous (Mt 9:13). And when you go to him who is a feast you will be satisfied – filled – vindicated as God brings abundant life in Jesus in you. I know folks who have been just crushed & have no idea if they are ever going to laugh again...if the fears will cease & the anxious voices inside be silenced. Hear me...Yes. You. Will. Our world needs to hear from & see in us trust in the promise God will in fact lift every weight that burdens us every sin that trips us up every brokenness that hinders our fullness of life in relationship w/ God or others.

What blessings await you when you live so out of step w/ the world's values & reflect the life of Jesus growing so fully in you that the world has to attack you or prove itself failing – world has to try to destroy you or admit defeat. Because you see what follows these "blessings" is a series of "woes." **"What sorrow awaits you who are rich... self-satisfied & prosperous ...who laugh now...who are praised by the crowds..."** The woe of riches – of well-fed satisfaction – of unlimited pleasure at your disposal – of a highly regarded reputation is that they blind us to our need for God & create a safe zone where we can retreat to forget the origin & purpose of our blessings...All we have is from God's hand & is intended to be used to strengthen & bless those around us. The "why" for you/me...Living Water **To** give the world a glimpse of Jesus ... If the world around us can't see him in us... where else will they? If we don't invite them...who else will? **Christ** dwells in you to be seen by the world!

As you leave today, be specific & share w/ your neighbour...

TAKE IT HOME

Where in the week ahead do you want Jesus to be most clearly seen?

(Be specific...who in your circle needs to see him...experience his life?)

Prayer after the sermon...

Father we are blessed not because of anything we have done but because of who you are. We are blessed not because of who we are but because of what Christ has done for us. Draw us deep into your love and pour out your life-giving grace through us so the world might be drawn to trust you in love for your saving goodness. We pray in Jesus' Name...Amen