

New Kilpatrick

Sermon

10th March 2019

John 13:31-38

Spirit... may we hear your call... follow your imagination... turn towards your voice... and feel your creativity within our community... our place of recreation... Come Spirit... and be here among us... So be it... Amen

Everything new... is well forgotten old... Someone said that to me this week in a visit... everything new... is well forgotten old... We were talking about recently being on the train and everyone on their mobiles... in their own wee world... some with earphones... some gaming... some reading... but no one saying a word to anyone...

Then we talked about train journeys 30 years ago... no mobiles... but everyone was hidden behind their newspaper... some reading the finance... some the headlines... some the crossword... but no one saying a word to anyone... Everything new is well forgotten old...

It used to be a yoyo for distraction... now candy crush or fortnite... 4000BC we used hieroglyphics to communicate... 2019 we use emojis... everything new is well forgotten old...

And then there are the words and ideas of Jesus command to love in today's passage... everything new is well forgotten old...

Let's explore that a bit... This week a story broke through the Brexit bubble... which in itself shows how serious it was... but the one thing that removed Brexit from the headlines for a moment... was the level of knife crime... and the argument over how to respond...

We aren't always holistic thinkers... We often take one issue and respond to it in isolation from the rest of life... We do it in the church quite a lot... We've got no youth... so we employ a youth worker... which rarely has the effect we want... A more holistic approach creates a community young folk are listened to... feel part of the decision making... feel they are in relationship with others... and what we do is relevant to their lives...

With knife crime... the immediate response is stop it happening by having more policing... stop and search... But that just compounds the problem because young folk feel even more threatened... and aren't welcomed or accepted or belong anywhere...

As we know... Glasgow... ten years ago... approached knife crime as a public health issue... and it made a big difference... It tackled the sense of exclusion... the lack of opportunity... adverse childhood experiences... It treated people in their context... and changed the context of their lives...

From encouraging local firms to employ those leaving prison who were particularly vulnerable... to support in keeping down a job for those whose lives were particularly chaotic... from new initiatives dealing with sectarianism... to referring and support for those excluded from school...

It saw the solution coming from across the whole community... in other words... it valued people... and their place... recognising the importance of the relationships we have with folk... The evidence says... and this is a direct quote from the findings... "people need stronger relationships and community... care and love"... and the report goes on to say... "These qualities sound mushy to our 21st century ears... They sound too emotional... too airy-fairy... too soft to be the values that could seriously guide cultural regeneration... Yet... that is the core message... relationships matter so much to human beings... they shape our very biology... and a conclusion to the report... Kindness matters"...

And you have to pause... and think... everything new is well forgotten old... because these words... while they are from an agency that has nothing to do with faith... their intent is pretty near exactly Jesus words...

What WE have grown up with as the values of our faith... and the insight of the stories we tell... are being rediscovered as the core tools... to recreate our communities as safer... and more just places...

Jesus love command today... when you strip away all the extra theology John the gospel writer wraps around it... is the same message...

Jesus is big on doing community... from Good Samaritans to Prodigal Sons... Syro-Phoenician women to the woman with the blood flow... inclusion... hospitality... love your neighbour... Jesus invites community... and as we grow as a congregation in what it means to be church... further into our community... and build new kinds of links and partnerships with others through what we do... focussing on relationships and

community... care and love... that report and Jesus words... are practically the same page...

It is the single reason we are organising a festival again this year... it is a kingdom imperative... to reshape our community with love and kindness and care and hospitality...

I recognise not everyone gets why we do the festival... or why the session decided to arrange the work of the congregation to focus on two areas... faith and community... it is for this reason... the love command... that is all about the kind of relationships we have and create and sustain with others who are not here on a Sunday...

It is letting kingdom rules reform our community... transforming our parish through the kind of relationships we build in our community... using Jesus own strategy in the love command... adding value... through kindness... through care... through inviting love... opening hospitality... being welcoming... into the very DNA of our parish...

It is why we do anything in the life of our congregation... Our reasoning is not to get disciples for Jesus... but to sow the kingdom in the world... not to get new members into this old institution of the church so it can keep going... but to transform our neighbourhood into a place of new life... inclusion... justice... using relationships of kindness and care and love and hospitality...

It is quite a moment when kingdom values parallel the research and insights of a non-faith agency...

And that is our vision... that is what is behind everything we do... everything we have been talking about recently... about what it means to be church... We've re-discovered the answer to that... in reshaping ourselves by helping reshape our community... through kingdom values...

So now we're moving to the next step... and beginning to think now... if that is what it means to be church today... then what kind of buildings... and resources... and volunteers... and teams and partnerships... do we grow... shape... and reshape... in order to make that possible... to transform our relationships with each other... and our community through those relationships based on kindness... care... love and hospitality...

We don't need to learn anything new... just re-learn something old... We are a congregation reinventing itself with its oldest values... where Alistair and Eleanor... and all of us... find the gospel still alive and still able to renew... life for all...

But it also moves us... from a church that could fear for our future... to giving us purpose in our future... a church that might want to isolate ourselves from the realities of the world... to engaging with them with new intent...

We are to be what the gospel has always called us to be... hospitable... loving... neighbours... giving of self in order to transform our parish... through the relationships we have with folk... It's never been rocket science... It has always been what we have suspected... and what others beyond our walls suspect too... the working out of Jesus command to love... Everything new... is well forgotten old...

References:

<http://aceawarescotland.com/vision>