

SHARING JESUS' LIFE TOGETHER.

TEXT: Various texts from this week's lectionary reading.

THEME:

To share life with Jesus and do it his way; not ours.

Grace, peace and mercy, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The sermon series still continues with the theme of Discipleship and today we are looking at "Sharing Jesus' life together" and what that means.

As I speak I hope that thoughts are starting to form in your head as I began with; 'sharing Jesus' life together'. That's right it's a bit different from the other titles of CARING and LIVING, life together with Jesus. This one is titled, SHARING.

That means sharing Jesus' life [not my life or your life] that he came to live: compared to making Jesus fit him into the way I live my life.

There's a shape and form that I need to get right; and we all struggle with that because first glances [looks] and appearances are deceiving [don't judge a book by its cover]. Our first thoughts can always fool us into thinking about the way we do things, or observe things in the first instance; and then WHAT is the way to go and do them.

Speaking about first appearances, the Old Testament prophet Samuel [in today's Old Testament reading, chapter 16] when God wanted him to get rid of Saul and to anoint David. Samuel thought that the first son of Jesse that he saw; and from all appearances he thought that Eli'ab, [a strong, likely looking lad] was the one God was going to anoint.

God rebuked Samuel from doing so, because God knew who he had in mind to make king; not whom Samuel had in mind would make a good king. We do the same sort of thing as well don't we; we rush into things, sometimes without thinking about it, and then end up with egg on our face.

In today's gospel lesson; The Blind Man, those who knew him and saw him every day actually struggled with his identity of who this guy was after he had been healed by Jesus. Even his parents struggled with who he was, **after** his sight was restored by Jesus. There's something in that, isn't there? There seems to be a bit of an enigma about this situation. Why is that so? For goodness sake they knew him quite well; then all of a sudden he has become a total stranger when his sight is restored! Has any thing like this ever happened to you at any time in your life?

Is it because the Blind Man is no longer fragile and dependent on any one to move him, to guide him around; to take him and seat him in the 'beggar's place', to make him comfortable; to take care of his all needs, all because he is so helpless, and needs constant attention?

In this way the people around him serve a purpose and are useful in their lives. Parents know what this is like with their own children, when the children are small they take care of all their needs; and the children rely on their parents for everything; then one day, they're gone; they're independent. They then look different in their parents eyes!

It's like they've received their sight, they know what to do, no longer are they small and fragile, they look different, no longer is the innocent little darling faces there anymore, but serious young men and women ready to take their place in society. The way they dress, talk, challenge and able to discuss and think through issues are totally different from what the parents are used to seeing in their helpless little children. Now they are seen in a different light. They don't need protecting anymore because they want to live the way they want to. Some families become estranged when they are no longer in need, or feel that their usefulness is now gone.

Not only does this happen with the young or fragile, but with the handicapped as well, as we see in this case of Jesus healing this blind man. What happens when roles are reversed and those in control lose their power and authority? What about when a wife becomes the main wage earner in the family, how does that affect the husband if he is

a strong proud man with strong beliefs and have always done the right thing? What becomes of him, now that his role is taken away from him?

He will naturally feel useless and worthless, next thing you know he's either gone some where or gone mad; become a total stranger or suicides. The shoe is now on the other foot. How about a person who is your junior partner at work now becomes your boss; how the tables have turned? What about when people in power have their roles challenged or undermined? Powerlessness can take over and make the situations puzzling.

I saw on Today Tonight during the week, of the anger and feedback with Workers Compensation having changes made to it; [for the worse, by the looks of it] so that workers who are injured and have to take time off to be healed are stripped of their benefits after a certain period. (The Premier, Mike Rann wants to cut the payments off all together after a [13 week] certain period.)

He is so determined that half his Cabinet was against it when he introduced it; [but now changed their mind]; and if he finds himself on the outer and out of government, it will be because he has lost touch and focus of what the people want. That is something he said himself [not to lose touch with how people feel] and to me; it seems that he is not listening to anyone anymore.

That is what can happen when people who are in control do what they want to do; and they forget they can be ousted just as easily as they have been put into power. Then again some people are in places where they think they know the rules and they enforce it.

The Pharisees struggled with this sort of concept [you come into their house; you live under their rules, you do what they say, and not what they do] but, 'how dare you', they say to Jesus; that you heal this blind man on the Sabbath; there are the other six days of the week to do your healing, but never do it on the Sabbath.

They obviously won't share their lives with Jesus even though he came to do good, and show mercy to all in whom he came into contact with. So how do we keep in touch with sharing Jesus; life, his way?

How do we apply living and sharing Jesus' life with him? Not doing what we think is right but doing it his way! After all, it is his kingdom come, not *our* kingdom come, so how do we fit into his kingdom. I don't believe that it is that hard. He came, he lived and he also had a core group of seventy believers that followed, supported and lived with him during his earthly ministry while he was upon the earth.

They obviously got on well with each other because of his basic message. Jesus' basic message or commandment was to love; in two ways or forms. People are to love their neighbors as themselves and their own families, and to love the Lord your God, with all their hearts, souls, minds and strength.

We don't always get it right but we are to try and do our best the best whatever way we can. Sometimes that love can get cold and the flame can go out; we can become a bit indifferent to each other; maybe like the friends and family of the Blind Man. They saw him differently and their attitudes towards him changed, maybe for the worse.

Let us all be of assistance to our other followers and non-believers the best we can. Because when someone is set free from their blindness; which can be from pure ignorance towards God and are then made aware of his great love for them, then another soul will be rejoicing in heaven.

Let's help them to be independent, so that they rely on God to love and do his will, and not to hinder their progress because it is NOT a reflection on us, that they are going ahead for the Lord in their lives. We don't have to worry about being seen in a bad light, don't let our pride make us blind to others who want to grow. Don't let us be that blind that we are guilty of not seeing [v 41] and turning people away from God's kingdom and family of believers.

Let us all be on this earth so that God's power [v3] is at work through each and every one of us in that God gets all the glory for our existence. Whether we are born blind or

are physically handicapped in any way; don't let that be the barrier of being blind to God's will in this world which began with his beloved Son Jesus. He came to die for all of our sins regardless of who we are and in what state of being we are. All are the same to him for we are all God's creation whom he loves so very much.

So; how do we show that glory? For a start we don't keep it to ourselves, which is not a family oriented thing to do in any case. We share it with those around us and do it to the best of our abilities. Jesus didn't hold back from any of us or was blind to our sins; he went all the way to death on the cross for each and every one of us. He came to show the way and we are to do it his way which was a simple case of loving each other unconditionally; not strings attached or what's in it for me.

The Blind Man's eyes were open for God's glory just as ours were at our baptism; let us see clearly how to share his life with others. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.