

Notes on Matthew 28 : 16 – 20 ‘Everyday Evangelism – a lifestyle for us all’

After Easter Gilli and I walked the Peak Pilgrimage, and after a long discussion we decided to walk along Baslow Edge, instead of walking along the Derwent in the valley. We did so because if we'd walked along the bottom, we knew we'd have missed out on both the views and challenges you have on the Edge. As you climbed would you have been like me, having covid as I did, muttering about the weight of my pack, the shortness of breath, the steepness of the climb and looking only at my feet? Instead, I know I should have stopped more and enjoyed the view which would have lifted my heart, mind and soul. Similarly, the choice of the phrase 'Everyday Evangelism' is a deliberate play on Everyday Supernatural. Like the phrase Everyday Supernatural, Everyday Evangelism is not something we do motivated by either fear or anxiety, instead it is knowing God nudging us to speak about Jesus, to give a reason for the hope which within us and to do so in the midst of ordinary life. This is why in this series I haven't used the word 'Everyday' in the sermon titles, but synonyms of it to give it a less predictable feel.

In the week after Easter there was a flurry of responses to the Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter message and his challenging of the current response to the migration crisis. The letters ranged from telling him to stop being an interfering priest to the banning of all religion. I did not see any letters that understood the link between Easter and truth and justice. When you read Matthew 28 verses 16 to 20 what link do you see? Do you see a text which generates guilt, or anxiety, or fear driven evangelism? Do you see a text which defines our primary purpose as a Christian as evangelism? Do you see a text which echoes my walk up to Baslow Edge; one that is a heavy load, that takes all your breath, that is steep and where you are always looking down at your feet? I think the answer is a resounding NO!! Matthew 28 verses 16 to 20 is not a one trick pony and to treat it so is to distort and denigrate it. Instead, it is a text filled with an abundance of rich and important words; which one do you think is the most important?

I think it is Jesus' command to us his people to 'Remember'. When we remember it is like the view you have from Baslow Edge and as the last word of Jesus, it is also the biggest and the broadest word he uses. Jesus wants us to remember him, to be overawed by him, to be filled with wonder at the gifts he lavishes on us, to be amazed at our identity in him, to be inspired by our purposes we have in him, to be secure in our safety in him and to be wowed by our value in him. Jesus again and again and again says remember, remember, remember the view we have of him as the crucified, resurrected and ascended Lord of all creation.

This is why we are to 'Teach' because we are to be lifelong learners of him as

we put into practice his virtue orientated lifestyle, his courageous lifestyle, his joyful lifestyle, his generous lifestyle, his Jesus focused lifestyle.

This is why we are to 'Make Disciples' because this process is one which requires patience, persistence and prayer as we learn to change from thinking only about ourselves to thinking about Jesus.

This is why we are to 'Baptise' because by this act people demonstrate their determination to belong to Jesus because they know they have died to self and now choose to live for him. But it is not only a celebration of saying I will live out this new identity, it is also a time when God marks us out as his by a deep work of the Spirit within us.

Finally, this is why we are to 'Go'. We go because we know Jesus' living words within us, we know them creating his life within us, we know they fill us with faith, we know they inspire in us hope and we know they energise us by, and to love.

As I prepared for this series, I could not but notice the contrast between David Watson's and Alistair Brown's 'I believe...' books. As I read Watson's, 'I believe in Evangelism' I was captivated by the joy he knows of the Gospel and his infectious scattergun approach to encouraging and enabling us to be those who speak about Jesus. Whereas, when I read Brown's 'I believe in Mission' and the reasons he gives why we are to tell others about Jesus, I felt more a sense of guilt at my failure and the realisation that I am now a very different sort of Christian motivated by very different things. In saying this, Brown becomes far more energising when he speaks of God's call on us all to be not just those who speak about Jesus but those who live out the world changing difference the Good News of Jesus calls us to.

For many years I avoided Matthew 28 like the plague, or more like covid, as I'd heard too many times the call to turn the church into just a maternity unit instead of a hospital. I'd heard it used too many times to justify the triumph of technique over the truth it proclaims. I'd heard and felt being manipulated and managed to be God's ever so slightly dodgy salesmen, especially when Romans 9 verses 14 and 15 were used alongside it. But when we hear what Jesus is really saying to us here we realise it is not true. Yes, Jesus is calling all of us to be those who speak up and out about Jesus, but we do this because we are captivated by the view from Baslow Edge that we day by day by day remember, remember, remember him. And as we remember him, so we realise he is with us as he promised by his Spirit and we are open to his nudging us to go and to tell others the wonderful Good News of all that he is. Read the first 8 examples of how the Hope Together 70 acts of service describe this and choose to do one of these.

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1. What does the phrase ‘Everyday Evangelism’ mean to you?
2. Why does Andy use the illustration of the view from Baslow Edge and what does it teach you about evangelism?
3. What do you think Matthew 28 verses 16 – 20 is about?
4. What do you think is the most important word in these verses and why does Andy choose the word ‘Remember’?
5. How do the other words Andy picks out from these verses build on and grow from the word ‘Remember’?
6. When you think of Evangelism what comes to mind immediately? Why?
7. Which of the first eight examples given in the 70 Acts of Service will you do this week?