

Good news, so smile

Several years ago I drove a truck throughout the greater Toronto areas. It was a genuine dirty job since I had to pick up waste cooking oil for recycling. Our biggest client was a large Pizza retailer with dozens of locations all over Toronto. Many employees were often recent immigrants who worked long hours for minimum wage. They were East Indian immigrants, newcomers from Russia and some recent arrivals from Asia. I always tried to make a point of having a conversation with the workers when I came by. I had the impression that many were not very happy: the long hours the small pay cheque, rude customers and demanding bosses were a fact of life for these people. I tried to bring a smile to their face and leave them a little better or cheerful than I first found them when I would walk in. I am not sure if I achieved my goal but I know more often than not many people were happy to see me, just to show up with a smile and a kind word seemed to make a difference.

In many stories about Jesus we read that when he would show up all kinds of good things happened. In Matthew ch.11 John the Baptist is wondering if Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus sends the following message back to John who is in prison:

?The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear the dead are raised and the good News is preached to the poor?

In Jesus' day ordinary people had very little to feel good about: The Romans had conquered their nation, the religious leaders placed impossible rules and burdens on the people. Tax collectors grew rich by taking advantage of their own people. The ordinary people were ready for some good news. In Matthew 9:36 it says:

When he (that is Jesus) saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Don't you feel a little like that as well?. Harassed and helpless?. We all know about taxes. Political leaders that only seem to care for themselves and whose family has not been touched by cancer or alzheimers?. Turn on the TV and all you hear is about disasters, war and starvation.

Are you not ready for some ?Good News?. Don't you long to hear ? the feet of those who bring good news and those who proclaim peace and salvation; who bring good tidings (Isaiah 52:7)

Hear the words of Isaiah in Chapter 61:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.?

It is clear that these words from the prophet Isaiah were prophetic words fulfilled by the birth of Jesus Christ who came to proclaim the Good News of salvation. When we look at Jesus throughout the Gospels we see how He came and bound up the broken hearted, He proclaimed liberty to those kept captive by their sins and diseases, He set people free from their addictions and bad habits. He came to restore and to rebuild the ruins of their broken and devastated lives??For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him? (John 3:17)

This is Good News! It is The Good News of Christmas. I am sure that some of you reading this can testify to fact that Jesus has been and continues to be ?Good News? in your life. He has been a source of strength, encouragement and real help. The question is what we are going to do with the Good News we have heard. I would imagine we really have two choices?..

We can keep it to ourselves, or we can share it. But do we really have a choice

How can we who have been shown so much grace and love from God keep silent knowing there is such a need out in the world around us. Like the shepherds who were told by the angels to check out this baby in the manger and afterwards they spread the news of what they heard and seen. They could not stop talking about it

And so it should be with us we need to share our love for Jesus. It has to be on display each and every day for all to see so you can share it with all around you.

I love the quote from JC Ryle: 'A holy believer is a walking sermon. He preaches far more than a minister does, for he preaches all the week round.'

When we are getting ready to celebrate Christmas, I would encourage you to become 'Good News' for the people around you. Here are 3 suggestions on how you can be 'Good News' to those around you:

'Smile' smile a lot. You have heard the good news of Jesus' birth and how He came to save you?. that is 'Good News' is it not? So notify your face and smile.

When you speak, speak words of hope and encouragement, words to lift people up. Talk about Jesus and what he has done for you. Share your favorite Jesus story or parable?. And remember to smile.

Lastly, be provoked into action. Jesus took action when confronted with the hurts and pain in this world. He moved to forgive, restore, heal and make things right. Jesus did not reject or was offended nor did he compromise. Be a Jesus follower and imitate Jesus in word and deed. (did I mention to smile..)

This coming Christmas season let us be Good News so that thru our words and deeds people may see Jesus.

And of course all this is not exclusively reserved for this holiday season. Let's be 'Good News' each and every day of the year. (and remember to smile).

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