

Hebrews 3:1-2 "It's not about you"

Proposition: God's faithfulness and kindness towards you is not based on your efforts but Jesus (THE apostle, THE High Priest) faithfulness to the Father.

Many years ago the 40 day devotional was put out called "The purpose Driven Life". Possibly the most impacting sentence in the whole book was the first one. It's not about you. In a similar way when I did the Dave Riddell counselling course some 12 years ago the phrase that hit me most was this; "live with an audience of one". And somehow those short profound words of wisdom seem to have the power to make the purpose of life clear and practical and simple. When you get it suddenly seems a lot more do-able and a lot more enjoyable.

The last time we opened up the letter to the Hebrews we ran through two chapters. Today I want to stop and pause over two simple but profound verses. And in order to help you see what the first readers saw; a real simple truth that will enable you to walk in confidence and at peace with God I will need to take you into the Hebrew mind for a little while. So if it looks like I am traipsing all over the bible following every cross reference, it is all going to come together in a life simplifying, freeing truth.

So let's leap into the minds of those early Christians who were living in Jerusalem who had once all been practising Jews then came to realize that Jesus was Jeshua the Messiah and they had come to put their faith in Him. Now these young Christians could still see the temple, they could still hear the trumpet blasts, they possibly could still smell the incense being burnt and there was a part of them that just yearned to combine their new found faith in Christ with the sacrificial system and rituals and familiarity of the old way of life culturally. They really felt a pull back into their culture and yet the writer of this letter keeps saying to them; don't go back keep it simple keep it focused it's all about Jesus, nothing more, nothing less and nothing else.

Hebrews 3:1-2

1My friends, God has chosen you to be his holy people. So think about Jesus, the one we call our apostle and high priest! 2Jesus was faithful to God, who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in serving all of God's people.

Now when you and I hear the word apostle we think that is Peter, James and John and the 12 that Jesus trained. However the word apostle simply means "Sent out one" and when this congregation heard the word apostle their minds would have definitely raced to that first sent out one who was sent out of Egypt by God to set their Hebrew ancestors free.

When they heard the title 'apostle' the first person that came to their minds was ... Moses, the first apostle. He was the first, the pre-eminent the most loved apostle for Israel and not only did God commission him and send him out around 3 million people, their ancestors followed him out of captivity as well. In the same way if you were to put yourself in those ancient Hebrew sandals when you heard the title high priest there is no doubt who would come to your mind, that first, that great high priest and Moses brother ... Aaron. As we continue to study this letter the writer reminds the people that Moses didn't make it into the Promised Land that had a few giants to be sure but also was synonymous with the spirit filled and blessed life. From chapter 5 onwards he also points out that Aaron and all the priestly descendants that were to follow him failed as well. Now the Hebrew congregation saw Moses as their apostle and Aaron their high priest. The writer here says to these Hebrew Christians:

So think about Jesus, the one we call our apostle and high priest.

For the Christian population, for the Christian congregations Jesus is our ultimate apostle and the ultimate high priest. He is our apostle and our high priest. Now for these Hebrew listeners thinking about their apostle and their high priest raised a lot of guilt feelings for them. If we turn to the 4th book of the bible to Numbers 20:1-9 we read of how these first two their historical apostle and their historical high priest failed

God miserably and how in fact the people helped cause their failure.

Numbers 20: 1-9:

1The people of Israel arrived at the Zin Desert during the first month and set up camp near the town of Kadesh. It was there that Miriam died and was buried. 2The Israelites had no water, so they went to Moses and Aaron 3and complained, " Moses, we'd be better off if we had died along with the others in front of the LORD's sacred tent. 4You brought us into this desert, and now we and our livestock are going to die! 5Egypt was better than this horrible place. At least there we had grain and figs and grapevines and pomegranates. But now we don't even have any water." 6Moses and Aaron went to the entrance to the sacred tent, where they bowed down. The LORD appeared to them in all of his glory 7-8and said, " Moses, get your walking stick. Then you and Aaron call the people together and command that rock to give you water. That's how you will provide water for the people of Israel and their livestock." 9Moses obeyed and took his stick from the sacred tent.

Now what is this stick that Moses had to go and get from the sacred tent, the tabernacle?

Many years earlier in the dessert Moses and Aaron had been in a similar position. The people were grumbling and they were rebelling against them saying, who gives you two men the right to think that you can lead the nation. Who appointed you and gave you the authority to lead. Then God speaks in

Numbers 17:1-10

1The LORD told Moses:

2-3Call together the twelve tribes of Israel and tell the leader of each tribe to write his name on the walking stick he carries as a symbol of his authority. Make sure Aaron's name is written on the one from the Levi tribe, then collect all the sticks.

4Place these sticks in the tent right in front of the sacred chest where I appear to you. 5I will then choose a man to be my priest, and his stick will sprout. After that happens, I won't have to listen to any more complaints about you.

6Moses told the people what the LORD had commanded, and they gave him the walking sticks from the twelve tribal leaders, including Aaron's from the Levi tribe. 7Moses took them and placed them in the LORD's sacred tent.

8The next day when Moses went into the tent, flowers and almonds were already growing on Aaron's stick. 9Moses brought the twelve sticks out of the tent and showed them to the people. Each of the leaders found his own and took it.

10But the LORD told Moses, " Put Aaron's stick back! Let it stay near the sacred chest as a warning to anyone who might think about rebelling....

So this stick sometimes called Aaron's rod, or Moses rod or even God's rod sprouted fruit blossoms and almonds to show that God had chosen Aaron to be the high priest. God had given him authority.

I would suggest to you that in life the person who has authority, real authority is not the person barking orders and trying to get everyone to conform but the person whose fruitfulness, to use the words of Galatians 5:22 whose love, joy, peace, patience and self control earns them that respect within their family, church or business.

Aaron's rod, his walking stick sprouted fruit blossoms as a sign that God had given him authority and the Lord told Moses to put the stick back in the tabernacle tent by the arc of the covenant. That is where this budding walking stick was kept.

Back to our second passage

Numbers 20 vs 7-8

7-8and said, " *Moses, get your walking stick. Then you and Aaron call the people together and command that rock to give you water. That's how you will provide water for the people of Israel and their livestock.*"
9*Moses obeyed and took his stick from the sacred tent.*

So Moses was to get this special budding stick, a symbol of God given authority and he was to talk to the rock and tell it to give him water. Now in the bible there are layers within layers of revelation and things that link back to the past and also forward to the future. There are two things that I want you to notice about the rock.

Back in Exodus 17 when they had only just started their wilderness wandering they faced the same situation. There was no water. The people started to grumble and moan and whinge and really have a go at Moses and Aaron. Why did you bring us out here to die of thirst, why didn't you leave us back in Egypt, it's your fault you two.

What happened? God tells Moses to take this same stick, the same stick incidentally that he lifted to part the Red Sea. God tells Moses to take this special stick and strike the rock with it and when he does out of its side gushed life giving water.

There are scriptures that point forward from here to Jesus as being the rock of ages, the rock of our salvation and that when he was struck with a stick on the cross out of his side flowed, blood – the symbol of forgiveness and water the symbol of life.

So Moses gets this special stick from the tabernacle tent and with it in hand was meant to go and speak to the rock. What happened?

10*After he and Aaron had gathered the people around the rock, he said, " Look, you rebellious people, and you will see water flow from this rock!"* **11***He raised his stick in the air and struck the rock two times. At once, water gushed from the rock, and the people and their livestock had water to drink.*

12*But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, " Because you refused to believe in my power, these people did not respect me. And so, you will not be the ones to lead them into the land I have promised."*

God was full of mercy and compassion for these complaining, whinging Israelites and was going to give them water easily if Moses just held the special stick of authority and spoke to the rock. But the people we are told in a summary of events found in Psalm 106:33 had so stressed out and angered Moses and Aaron that Moses, God's representative portrays to the people an angry God who has lost patience with them and is very angry with them. God wasn't angry he was full of compassion but Moses and Aaron had had enough and they became angry and blasted the Israelites, you bunch of useless rebellious people and Moses smashed the rock.

The fruitfulness of the stick was a symbol of God's authority on them but you have to wonder what happened to the fruit-buds and the almonds when it got bashed against the rock. The reality is Moses and Aaron lost their authority to lead, because they lashed out and misrepresented God. Now God is a fantastically forgiving God but His grace does not spare us from the consequences of sin. I have heard foolish people say well if I get drunk, if I look at that porn site, if I give that idiot a whack, God will forgive me, and He will its true but there are always consequences for our sins and usually God does not protect us from the consequences of sin. Moses and Aaron sinned. The authority was handed over to Joshua and they never entered the Promised Land.

Moses and Aaron never entered into the Promised Land, the land of blessing and abundance and a few giants. But I know that God forgave them because it says at the end of Hebrews 3:2 that Moses was faithful in serving God's people. His failure wasn't held against him. His faith and the blood sacrifices had brought about his forgiveness. And in a way God did sneak him into the Promised Land because some 1500 years later on the mount of transfiguration in Israel who do we see standing with Jesus and Elijah?? Moses.

Now having taken you to the desert and sticks and rocks we come back to our passage.

There was a huge amount of guilt in the Hebrew mind associated with their apostle Moses and their high

priest Aaron, why because they know that their stubbornness, their sinfulness, their slowness to learn, their whinging drove Moses and Aaron to sin and so they missed out on the Promised Land. Moses and Aaron just got sick of them, after nearly 40 years their patience finally ran out and they became very angry.

Back to our passage in Hebrews again.

Hebrews 3:1 & 2

So think about Jesus, the one we call OUR apostle and high priest.

An uncomfortable feeling would have descended on them at this point. OK Jesus is OUR, this congregations, this group of believers apostle and high priest but didn't we drive the last ones to sin, didn't our ancestors drive the last ones crazy with our impatience and stubbornness?? Feeling of guilt; feelings of guilt and worry.

Have you ever thought like them?

I wonder if now that I have been a Christian for these two years or twenty years or 50 years if I am driving God a bit crazy, I mean I am such a slow learner. Sometimes I get tired and sin. Sometimes I think with all the experiences I have had and the knowledge I have gained shouldn't I be a lot further down the track, much more mature as a Christian by now. I wonder if He's losing patience with me, if I am driving him crazy, if he has nearly had enough of me by now.

Ever thought like that.

These people would have heard that Jesus is both the sent one from God and their ultimate High priest.

Notice what is said next.

Jesus was faithful to God who appointed Him.

It doesn't say that Jesus was faithful to me because I never annoyed him, disappointed him or let him down. But Jesus remains faithful in all that the Lord does on earth and in heaven because He is doing it unto the Father who will never pressure him or stress him out.

Jesus lived to do the will of the Father.

His love and goodness that He directs towards you and me is not based on have we fasted enough or prayed enough or read enough. His practical love for you and I is based on his commitment to do the will of the Father. He was faithful to God who appointed Him.

God's goodness to me and His favour on me is not based on how quick I am to learn 10 spiritual keys to victory or how long I have been praying for this week. Jesus will show you and I grace and kindness consistently even when we know we don't deserve it, why, because that is how he expresses his love for the Father. Will he get fed up with me? Will he get stressed out over you? Will he one day say – I am sick of him, too stubborn, to sinful, too slow at learning? Even though you and I might be tempted to say that would be fair enough.

No He will consistently love us as our Perfect apostle and as our Perfect High Priest because His love is not based on our goodness but on His commitment to do the will of the Father. He is faithful to the one who called Him. So it's not about my intercession, my bible study, my discovering some new spiritual key, it's all about Him, His prayers, His grace, His faithfulness to the Father.

God is not going to get fed up with me or get impatient with me or lose the plot at me because my relationship to God is based on Jesus' faithfulness to the Father.

Not only that, but consider just how profoundly God loves each one of us.

Just before Jesus paid our fines with His blood He our High priest prayed a priestly prayer for us in the garden. **John 17** records that prayer.

As he gave an account of his ministry to the Father Jesus said; **vs20**

20I am not praying just for these followers. I am also praying for everyone else who will have faith because of what my followers will say about me.

Jesus was praying for anyone who would at some stage hear the gospel, that is you and me.

Let's look at just a part of His priestly prayer for you and I.

John 17:22-23

22I have honored my followers in the same way that you honored me, in order that they may be one with each other, just as we are one. 23I am one with them, and you are one with me, so that they may become completely one. Then this world's people will know that you sent me. They will know that you love my followers as much as you love me.

There is only one Jesus, one saviour and Lord but Father loves you and I equally, we too have become His kids. Amazing.

So how does that affect the way we will live the Christian life this week?

Firstly, though we know our shortcomings and failings – we know that it's not about us, God's love and goodness towards us is not based on our efforts but on the faithfulness of our apostle and our high priest Jesus Christ. He is not getting impatient with us. He is not angry with us wanting to smash down with some holy stick. Jesus will always be with us and help us because that is what he does out of His commitment to the Father, the one who appointed Him. You and I don't have to earn His ongoing approval, because of Jesus it is ours already, in fact we are not only made acceptable to God but we are profoundly loved by God as one of His kids.

It's not about me, it's about Jesus and His faithfulness to the Father and the Fathers love for me.

When you get that the pressure goes off. The worry goes out the door and you start to walk in a new confidence and peace in life. No one has to tell you to pray – you just want to hang out with God, you naturally look for opportunities to be a co-labourer with Him. It's not a burden, it's not hard. You are not out to prove anything to yourself or anyone else. No one has to tell you to go and share your faith with others; that becomes just a natural overflow of a life that is full of thankfulness and the presence of God. This little truth; it's not about you, it's all about Him and His love for you can set you free to really enjoy life and your relationship with God if you let it and I pray that with the help of the Holy Spirit you do this morning.