

Real Passion Luke 6:13-16

Proposition: Passion in the western world is often misplaced. Jesus was consumed with a passion for His Father's house. Let's let His fire ignite our fire with the right passion.

In life we often identify people by the passions that they have. He's passionate about cricket. She's passionate about shoes. They are passionate about their new Ford Challenger. He's a muso. She is a fisherwoman. That man loves to dance.

I want to look at the topic of passion this morning and share with you what that looks like if it is a misplaced passion and what it looks like if it is a properly placed passion. The old word for passion is the word zeal which you will find in many of your older translations as we look up scriptures this morning.

The passage that we are going to begin from is in Luke 6:13-16 where Jesus calls 12 apostles and I want you to take note of one of these apostles in particular.

Let me set the context for you. Jesus has begun his ministry and large numbers of people would follow him everywhere. These people, the crowd were called his disciples, the word disciple meaning 'disciplined ones' because they were disciplined at studying the words and actions of Jesus. Jesus looks at this large crowd of disciples and chooses twelve of them to be apostles, that is 12 people who he will intimately train up to be sent out ones, that's what apostle means, a sent out one. Lots of people would like to be sent out Jesus into the world on missions for Him and yet it's worth noting that he chose the ones who had spent time with Him, studying and learning to be set aside, trained up and sent out. I think that is still true today, when Jesus is looking for people to equip and release to significant missions he looks for such people amongst those who are already studying, already at home groups, already witnessing and bearing fruit for his kingdom.

He chooses 12 apostles from amongst the crowd.

Have you ever wondered why 12?

I believe that as 12 is the Hebrew number for government, that as Israel had been governed through the 12 tribe system for generations, Jesus deliberately chose only 12 to show that he was setting up a new government that wasn't temporary or like anything else on earth. A government that He would call the kingdom of God.

And so Jesus is looking at the crowd and calling out from the students, the disciplined ones 12 people who will be latter sent out as apostles to establish this new kingdom, the kingdom of God.



Luke 6:13-16 (New International Version, ©2010)

¹³ When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: ¹⁴ Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵ Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Interesting group of people, particularly when you look at two in particular. Matthew mentioned here is a tax collector, that is he is a turncoat, who has become like a Roman to extort money from his own people. What was Jesus thinking looking at the crowd and saying hey, you IRD guy, you are in my team, come over here.

There is another really strange choice who was picked 10th in the list. Scripture calls him Simon the Zealot. So there are two Simons on the team but this one is known as a Zealot, or an eager one. To be a Zealot in that day and age when Israel was under Roman oppression was to be a part of a small band of men who would do anything to get rid of the Roman oppressors. They were Zealous, passionate, violent people. They would carry a curved dagger in their robes and when they saw a Roman person isolated from the crowd they would pull out the concealed dagger and make their point.

Zealots, were extremists, singularly focused people determined to get rid of Roman oppression at any cost.

Now could you ever get in your team two more diametrically opposing view points. Matthew the tax collector who is in it for the buck and is a turncoat, sold over to the Romans, helping to oppress his own people, basically a Hebrew living as a Roman. And Simon the Zealot, the eager one willing to kill at chance to get rid of the Romans.

If I had two people with opposite viewpoints on my team I would keep them well apart, possibly in different buildings so they wouldn't kill each other, but in the presence of Jesus its amazing how political views and opinions come to nothing and real unity can take place among the most radical people.

Now I like passionate people. I don't like the balanced careful approach to life. I see Christians as pioneers in society changing the world around us through radical Jesus like activity.

When I see people screaming at the rugby or committed to some cause I kind of like to see that passion, that zeal. I like people who will pay the price, take the risk, expend the energy to bring about change. I actually wonder if it was that singular focus and zeal that attracted Jesus' attention

to Simon. I wonder if Jesus looked at this disciple knowing of his passion and thought, this is just the kind of guy that I can use.

But there are wise passions and unwise passions.

Scripture encourages us to work hard and serve our employers diligently and humbly, and I believe that and have tried to live it but some times folk get so passionate about their business' success that they devote hours and hours extra to the job, to climb the ladder or secure the company. All for things that will one day just burn up, and I wonder if these extremes are misguided passions, misguided zeal.

The prophet Haggai in the OT was sent by God to Israel at a time when the people were really focused on business success and yet the place of worship was a shambles. Haggai comes on the scene and says to them, do you know why all your food doesn't satisfy, why you work so hard but you feel that you have holes in your pockets, its because your passion/ your zeal is misguided. Sort out the place of worship then you will find that God will give you food to satisfy you and there won't seem to be holes in your pockets. Really his message was a bit like the Lords on the sermon on the mount when Jesus said seek first the kingdom and his righteousness and these things will be added to you as well.

Scripture gives examples of people who are zealous about politics and says that to put your passion here is misguided. Now we need Christian politicians and the Christian voice in NZ but what defines you, what is noticed about you should not be a passion for politics but for the Lord. In 2 Samuel we read of Sauls political passions and how he killed a whole lot of Gibeonites that he should not have killed as he got carried away in this passion.

Sometimes we describe a person as a health or a fitness freak. Its their passion for exercise or sports that define them. Again its important to keep these temples fit and well but Paul would say that physical exercise helps a little but Godliness brings eternal rewards.

I heard some one discussing a scientific report that said that if there were no diseases in the world and we never had any accidents, most people would still die around the age of 85 because the body will wind down and decay around that age. If you get to my age and you look in the mirror you know that decay has begun to settle in. Grey hairs, eyesight, wrinkles.

Keep fit and healthy by all means. Look after the temple of the Holy Spirit but don't go overboard on this as your body, like mine is inevitably going to decay.

I have seen misplaced passions in Christian circles as well. Its really sad. Some focus just on this verse or those few passages and make a song and dance about it, they just choose bits and become strange all in the name of faith and its wrong.

Some get so passionate about a revelation or a truth in the bible that they forget to first deal with others with grace and love.

The Pharisees around Jesus' earthly time were like that. There were around 6,000 of them and they would try to keep all the fine detail of the law. Jesus said they would sift their soup for insects and not notice that they were eating camels instead.

⁴² “Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.

These legalists would do their shopping and when it came time to sort out the groceries they would pour out the salt and herb grains on the table and sort out 9 for them 1 for God. And yet they failed to protect the poor and down trodden and they failed to love God. Idiots.

If we are passionate about parts of the gospel but find that we are hurting those around us, getting judgement or feeling superior, forgetting grace and love, something is out of whack.

Jesus on the other hand modelled for us a righteous, Godly passion. Do you remember the account of what happened when Jesus went into the temple in John 2 and foreigners were coming to exchange their money for Hebrew money that could be given as an offering and the money changers were ripping off their worshippers. Others were there to accept animal sacrifices and they would examine some ones sheep or goat and say they were blemished when there really weren't. Then they would sell a pre approved animal from their live stock and inflated prices to the worshipper. Jesus turns up and he finds whole lot of thing ropes and ties them together into a whip he starts clearing the temple. Tipping over tables of the money changers and chasing out the extortionists and their livestock.

John 2:17 (New International Version, ©2010)

¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”^[a]

The disciples looked at Jesus and the burning passion that he felt for His Fathers place of worship and they remembered that this had been prophesied previously.

Jesus was passionate, zealous, singularly focused on doing what He saw the Father doing, on bringing in His new kingdom, the kingdom of God.

And scriptures says that we too are to be passionate people, zealots, like Him. Its interesting to me that when you look at the prophets – smashing pots, pulling beards, cooking on dung etc, when you look at John the Baptist and the Lord, when you look at the early church apostles and missionaries, they were all sold out for the Lord, radical, ready to die for their faith people. And I believe that its that passion for the kingdom that is the catalyst, the vehicle that God uses to bring about change in society.

1. We are to be passionate about Repentance.

In Revelation 3 Jesus is speaking to a Christian church and acknowledges that they had been doing some pretty good stuff, that he saw they felt blessed and comfortable, that they were rich and Jesus challenges them

Revelations 3: ¹⁵I know everything you have done, and you are not cold or hot. I wish you were either one or the other. ¹⁶But since you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷You claim to be rich and successful and to have everything you need. But you don't know how bad off you are. You are pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

I wish that you were either hot or cold so I could use you or convict you but you are neither, you are a mixture.

Jesus knocks at the door of this lukewarm church calling it to repent, that is to turn 180 degrees and go in the other direction.

Friends we cannot be apathetic or comfortable and used greatly by God we need to be hot, fired up and one of the ways in which we can be passionate for the kingdom is to be passionate about repentance.

No I, I guess I have made a mistake, I have been caught out by God or my friends I have to make a change, I am sorry. Whatever.

Repentance says, I am going to stop going this way which will lead me to destruction and without any hesitation or procrastination I am determined to head in the exact opposite direction. I have been grumpy to my kids, I repent I am determined to bless my kids. I have been selfish. I repent am determined to serve. I have been drunk or stoned. I repent. I am never going back there, I am headed in a whole new direction. Be passionate, not half hearted about repentance.

2. We are to be passionate about PRAYER.

Colossians 4:12-13 (Contemporary English Version)

¹²Your own Epaphras, who serves Christ Jesus, sends his greetings. He always prays hard that you may fully know what the Lord wants you to do and that you may do it completely.

¹³I have seen how much trouble he has gone through for you and for the followers in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Paul is saying to the church at Colossi, this is how you pray, man this guy he is always at some cost praying that you will all do well in your walk with the Lord. Be passionate in your prayers like Epaphras.

Its interesting to me that much of the teaching on prayer in the bible is in the present continuous, eg when you pray keep on praying, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. Be passionate when you pray, keep on praying, why because the Lord enjoys your company. He is not trying to be mean or hard to please. When you pray you are close to Him and that is what He loves. That is why I believe not all prayers are answered instantly because there is a journey, a relationship that He wants to enjoy with you. But it takes a passion a zealousness to pray like that.

Eg 2 Kings 13 King Joash and the old prophet Elisha

I don't know that passion has to be loud and noisy to be passion. I think a passion for the kingdom is a heart thing, a determination, a focus of the heart and may not require loud shouts etc. eg skinny truck driver

Friends Jesus was really passionate about the kingdom.

We too can be passionate about repentance, not mucking God around but turning ourselves around and going in the other direction. We can be passionate about prayer, focused, determined, zealous.

3. We are to be passionate about doing acts of kindness. Zealous about loving God and loving people practically.

I am impressed by what Paul had to say about the church at Corinth in

2 Corinthians 9

The Money for God's People

¹I don't need to write you about the money you plan to give for God's people. ²I know how eager you are to give. And I have proudly told the

Lord's followers in Macedonia that you people in Achaia have been ready for a whole year. Now your desire to give has made them want to give.

This church is so impressive. They have heard how poor the Christians are back in Jerusalem and they take up a love offering for their brothers and sisters in Christ 'a year' before the apostle Paul was going to send people to collect it. Their passion to serve through giving is amazing and Paul says that their desire to serve has inspired others to serve God as well.

The Baptist movement was founded on the belief that the bible is the inspired word of God totally, on the conviction that believers baptism is the only biblical form of baptism and on this principle, called the priesthood of all believers that all of us can hear Gods voice and all of us have a ministry or ministries that we are designed by God to serve in.

Friends, when folk look at you and me. Do they say. Oh he's the guy that loves fishing. Oh she is the girl who loves to dance. Oh they are the couple that are pro the environment or this political party. He is a sporting fanatic or she is a work-a-holic.

As good as these things are in the right proportions, may it be that people will look at us as a family and identify us as a people who are passionate about living for God and running from sin, passionate about prayer and passionate about loving God and loving people practically.

I wish that I could pray a prayer and lay my hands on you so that you would become fired up spiritually. But I think the way to zeal for Gods kingdom doesn't come from a prayer but from a disciples life-style where we learn His ways and study His words.