

Pastor Lloyd's Sermon notes 12 July 2020

YESTERDAYS MAN OR WOMAN Acts 10:9-20

Illus Trapeze – About 12 years ago we were privileged to have as guests to our church in Tauranga members of the world-renown 'The flying Wallendas'. Founded by Karl **Wallenda**, this family specialised in high wire balancing stunts. Their most well-known was a seven-person pyramid balancing upon each other's shoulders. Sadly, Karl fell to his death in 1978 while performing. The family continued to perform until 2017. I remember as a child going along to a circus and being wowed by those flying trapeze. But one thing I remember the family saying when they spoke that night of the trapeze. "*There comes this moment when you have to let go before you can grab onto what is coming towards you!*"! And that's along the lines of the message I want to share with you today. Today, I want to take that same teaching and apply it to a story from the early church. I want to show you how this works out practically in our lives. My message today centres around that we need to *relinquish before we can embrace*.

The Image of God

Last week I shared with you four ways in which we are made with the image of in our lives. This is God's imprint inside us. God is relational, rational, emotional, and volitional – 2 Cor 3:17. This change in our lives that is both immediate (point in time) and a slow change (lifelong) – are both equally important.

What is the Therefore there for?

But before we get onto the passage for today's message, I want you to see something from the very next verse after v17. 2 Cor 4.1 *Therefore...* Whenever you see a 'therefore' in the Bible, you need to ask a question. And the question is this.... what is 'therefore' there for! This change God is doing inside us is happening to us as frail, broken containers of God's power. We hold this powerful imprint of God in our lives, but we are really quite vulnerable. You don't have to live too long on this earth to know this of others; that other people are broken. But guess what, an even greater revelation is to know that you are broken too. You are broken in your thinking, feeling, relationships, physical body and most of all your choosing. When we talk about being saved, most of us think about the day we prayed a prayer to receive Christ and that is true. But friends, we are being saved now too....this week I've been saved from what? For too many of us, our being saved stories are too old. They are about the immediate but not the journey.

Now today's message is entitled Yesterday's man or woman or tomorrow's?

Reading. Acts 10 :9-20

A good story writer is able to capture its reader by tantalising them with parts of a story that only makes sense once the plot fully unfolds. It's a bit like having only one part of a jigsaw and somehow expecting to see the whole picture. Or like trying to do one of those annoying **WASJIGS** where you don't have a clue what picture you're trying to re-create. In this story, it's a bit like that....we see part of the story from Cornelius's perspective, then another from Peter's and finally the joint story when both meet up. But underneath the story is the purposes of God being worked out and the players have no real insight that this is happening.

The context of this story starts before the part I read today. It concerns a man who a non-Jew called Cornelius. He was told to send some men to bring Peter from Joppa to where he lived. That's all he knows. Meanwhile, Peter is having this vision of all the unclean inedible food being let down from above in a linen sheet....all the things that as a boy he had been told – don't eat!! And then the command – get up and cook and eat it. Three times this happens. He is pondering this when there is knock on his door and people are there whom God has bought to him who will then lead him to non-Jews so he can tell them about Jesus. Now the two parts come together to a surprising outcome that neither foresees. It seems God wants all people to know about what Jesus did. Now here is 'why' of the story.....If somehow God could not overcome Peters prejudice and change his thinking....the gospel would have never reached out beyond one nation and resulted in a sprinkling of God-fearers. What's involved here?

All four capacities for reflecting his image that God has built into each of us are built into this story. Relationship is at the core of this story, change of thinking is at core of this story, and emotional feeling is here too, as is choosing.... God asks Peter to step outside his thinking, his prejudice, his feelings and to choose to do something outrageous so his purposes could be fulfilled.

So here is the choice Peter needs to make....and its going to involve him in all four areas – relational, thinking, emotional and choosing.

Can he **relearn** something that he has believed all his life to be wrong is now OK? – thinking. Can he **embrace relationally** those who he has for so long thought to be outside God's blessing (Gentiles). Will his **feelings** cause him to stumble when it comes to making a choice to embrace the new things God is telling him? And lastly, can he make the **choice to obey** the voice of the Holy Spirit even though it goes against everything he has thought, felt and believed.

Today message is entitled yesterday's man – and the question I have for you today is, are you a yesterday man or woman or are you tomorrow's man or woman?

You see, if Peter was a yesterday's man, he would have dismissed the dream. I want you to note something important. God did not change his mind about the gospel message; He planned all along to open up the invitation to people of all races, colours and cultures.... he just needed people to change their mind about what they had been practising for so long.

And here is the point of my message to us today. Are we yesterday's men or woman or tomorrows men and woman? If yesterday's men and woman, then we will:

- Live in the secure past of what you know and have practised – thinking that nothing will change you, no new revelation or insight is possible because you have already got it all sorted. Who does that sound like? – The Pharisee's!
- Live with the surety of being right because you have always done something in a particular way
- Live with clear boundaries and rules set in place

But tomorrows men and woman will:

- Live with an openness to change their thinking when it does not line up with the new thing God wants to do or when through fallen and broken thinking we have so far departed from Gods truth.
- Live with a willingness to obey the voice of the Spirit even when it does not fully make sense to them

You see, God has a problem.....how was the gospel going to break out of its Jewish cubbyhole? For generations, God had revealed himself to his chosen people....the laws, commands and rules had been set in stone. God had to find someone ***for whom obedience to his direction was more important than boundaries rules and familiarity***...and that person was Peter.

My question to you today....is that person you?

Are you a yesterday's man or woman or tomorrow's man and woman?

Yesterday's man is much more secure in what he or she knows

Yesterday's man or woman loves the familiarity, and the known, and the rules

Yesterday's man likes being right – orthodox and conservative is their badge

But tomorrows man or woman steps out into the unfamiliar and untested

Now take this thinking and relook at much of the Bible....you will find in most places God asks people to step out into unknown and do something that hasn't been done before.

Started right back in Genesis – **Abram** – leave your place and go to a land

Noah - God asks to build an ark in the middle of a desert

Moses - lead the people out of slavery to the Promised Land

Saul was a yesterday's man - David was a tomorrow's man who waited for 20 years to become king. In fact, the full list is found in Hebrews 11.... They are all tomorrow's men and

woman because ***obedience to God was more important to them than rules tradition and the past.***

Friends, how does impact upon us today?

We can be so caught up with ***doing the right things the right way....***

Or doing what we used to do because it worked then so we miss the new thing God is wanting to do. We can be so taken with what people think of us and our reputation that we are immobilised from being part of God's tomorrow purposes. We can think that in order to obtain Gods blessing, we just need to keep doing what we have done in the past. After all, isn't that what Gods hand of blessing was on then?

Churches and people have seasons and chapters in their stories. And here is what I've learned; that God wants us to be tomorrow's people, tomorrow's church, and open to new ways and new expressions of doing church.

If we can just get back to the evangelism methods of last century

If we can just recover the enthusiasm of the charismatic movement

If we can just make our service more friendly and open to the unsaved

If we can just see a move of God like the Toronto blessing

If we can just find a pastor who is like one we used to have years ago

If we can just reproduce what it used to be like....sound familiar?

We long for the tomorrows, but we often base this on the measurements of our yesterdays

God is saying – "***I'm looking for tomorrow's people who will use their God-given imprint, look past their relational history, think again about their exclusive prejudice, step around their feelings and choose me.***" – Did you see all four images of God in that statement?

The story finishes with Peter sharing the good news to the Gentiles...and God confirming by his Spirit that a new day had come....and people from all tribes, tongues and cultures were welcome into his family.

Let me finish by returning to the trapeze. There comes a moment when to hold on will hurt more than letting go. You cannot make the new until you let go of the old. We all have things to let go of in our lives.

The way we have viewed others different to ourselves

Relationships from the past that we have allowed to define us

The past ways of doing things that were for a past season in time

Unforgiveness towards those who have offended or hurt us

Much of our pre-packaged thinking that boxes God into predictability

The kind of thinking that has us at the centre of any outcome

The disappointments of the past when God hasn't done what we want or people have said or done things that we think messed up what we thought God should do.