

**OUR CORE VALUES No 3 - "We Value Truth over Comfort" READING – John 21:1-17**

We are in a series of five messages on what are our core values in life and relationships. We are asking questions like - What are the five things we will value? What kind of people do we want to be and what kind of church do we want to be? This is the third message in five. (1) Value Relationship over Tradition – (2) Value Grace over Performance – and today (3) Value Truth over Discomfort. Turn with me to John 21: 1-17 – let's read together.

The year was 1953 and while Everest was being climbed and conquered there was another mountain in the vicinity - K2 the world's 2nd highest mountain, on which a drama was unfolding. A storm on the Abruzzi Ridge—25,000 feet up on the slopes of K2, climbers were sent scrambling to save the life of a fellow mountaineer. As they were lowering him down an icy slope. One of the climbers in this rescue, George Bell lost his footing and was roped to four others – all five men plunged down the face of the mountain towards their deaths. The quick thinking of another in the climbing party Peter Schoening jammed his ice axe behind a boulder and arrested the fall of the five men. This act called a 'belay' is now recognised as one of the most heroic acts in all of mountaineering history. Peter Schoening's ice axe today is on display in the Bradford Washburn American Mountaineering Museum. Truth-telling, or telling yourself the truth is just like that ice axe – it can arrest your life from a spiralling dive on a slippery slope as you and I learn to speak the truth and make fixed points that won't move in our lives. In His book 'Telling yourself the Truth' William Backus says we can deal with most of our untruths (misbeliefs) by simply doing three things;

- 1) Identifying and locating them - our self-talk/what we tell ourselves
- 2) Remove or relinquish - giving up on those misbeliefs
- 3) Replacing them with the truth.

Telling ourselves the truth about our lives is not always easy to do, we learn to live with misbeliefs and lies which support the way we cope with life and the people around us. There is one person you must live with all your life.... YOU! You see you are what you choose to be and those choices are based on your beliefs and assumptions. What God wants to do with us is re-coach our beliefs and assumptions so they reflect the truth. Today my message I hope will challenge you as I give your four ice axe truths that you can rely on.... based on this story from John 21. In fact, I could have chosen any number of stories from the Bible. Lying in bed the other morning Judy and I recalled about 20 Bible stories where these four components are present.... This is not an obscure truth tucked away in some dusty corner of the Bible. It is integral.

**(1) YOU ARE LOVEABLE**

Probably the most known about yourself yet the most life-changing. God loves you and has his affections set on you. He is crazy about you. He cannot love you...for He is love. And that makes you valuable to Him. Before you were born he loved you, while you were in your mother's womb he saw you, He saw you the day you learned to walk, your first day at school, and He is delighted in your defining life experiences – you cannot change this truth – it just is. He did not love Apostle Peter any less or more because of who he was or what he did. The Bible says – he just looked at him and loved him. He loved him when he was impetuous and when he was wholehearted. Take any number of stories, Jonah, Jacob, Mary Magdalene, etc.... knowing that we are loved somehow unmarks us, especially when we feel unlovable. Somehow in our

heart of hearts, we know and sense deep down that we are not that loveable. The reason for that is because **we know what lurks beneath**, and we question why and for what reason God might want to love us. We want to try and earn that love or repay that affection, but you cannot. The truth is you are loveable.....yes you. Because God is love....His character is love, His heart is love, and His ways are love. And God cannot act out of character. The prophet Hosea demonstrated this when God told him to go and marry a prostitute and in doing so he was to declare the love of God for a wayward people.... It changed nothing because of the behaviour of the woman he married and her lifestyle. Love just was.... And is. And we respond to that love – like Peter – dive in and swim to shore.

## **(2) YOU ARE RECOVERABLE**

The second truth that is also somewhat uncomfortable but true, is that there is nothing you can do, and no place you can go where you cannot find your way home to the Father. The truth about you is that you are recoverable, redeemable, there is hope for your life. God is not put off by your waywardness, He does not become disinterested by even your compromise. He waits for you to turn towards Him and he reaches towards you to lift your life. The truth about you is that whatever you've done, whatever you're into now, wherever you have got to - there is hope and a way home. That's the story here in John 21, after Peter's public denial of Jesus, and his public disgrace, Jesus meets him on the beach with a BBQ fire. And he reaches into Peter's heart and conquers it again. You are recoverable and forgivable. The story of the Bible is a story of recovery. Every one of us is in a sense in recovery mode. Are you OK so far... Those are the easy ones....that you have heard before now and here are two more truths that may not be so easy to accept about yourself.

## **(3) YOU ARE FALLIBLE**

There is something about every one of us here today that we don't want to expose to each other, and that is frailties, and failings, the dark side to who we are that is yet to be healed, yet to be changed and transformed. You see here is the truth that might be uncomfortable for many of us. We *all* have baggage, we all have stuff that is in our lives that has not yet been dealt with. We can allow these bruises from our past to impact our lives and other people's lives.

We have listened to two stories in the media over the past week; Mr. Uffendell and Dr. Sharma - both men are in various ways trying to cope with past events that have affected their political careers. It's ugly, it's public, and it's without ethics or grace. That is how the world deals with people's frailties – one man is trying to whistle blow on bullying rampant in the workplace and the other is trying to break free from his past mistakes made years ago. So is this topic and what I am saying is we all have these stories in different shapes and sizes. One comment that was made this week which I thought was perceptive was –“how many other skeletons and hidden stories are there in the beehive waiting to be unearthed”!

Here Peter learns about his fallibility. He discovers the truth about himself and his Saviour that his woundedness and frailties do not disqualify him. In fact, Jesus takes these very experiences and uses them to shape him for the future mission of his life. ‘Do you love me three times Jesus asks? Then feed my sheep. You see the truth about ourselves is that we are all fellow limpers. I recommend to you a wonderful book I read entitled ‘Leaders who Limp’ – makes the point that every leader in the Bible whom God used walked with a limp of frailty and failure.... A limp they never forgot. Yes God can heal and restore, but you never forget what grace is like when God came to you and rescued you, from yourself. You see what happens is that when we acknowledge our frailties God builds strength and character into us and those

areas of bruise and brokenness become tested and tried areas where our character is shaped in us. In fact, what often happens is that we end up helping people who are facing the same failures we ourselves have traversed.

And it is when *we are not healed* from our past frailties, failings, and bruising that we do one or more of three things that impact others:

- 1) Project onto others our stuff (Insist that others see things from my point of view!).
- 2) Protect our turf – become a policeman (We defend our view or perspective).
- 3) React or overreact to situations that we don't need to (What button did I push?)

You see grace comes to people who know the truth about themselves, that they are broken. The Holy Spirit is given to people who know they need to be filled with the "good stuff" because left to themselves their DNA is to protect, project, and react.

What Jesus was doing in this BBQ on the beach was coming to Peter and saying to him... you're loveable, you're recoverable, and you are fallible....and now you know it. But I've got work for you to do. I am going to take you with your past and trust you with the keys of the kingdom. I am going to *commission* you with a mission.

#### **(4) YOU ARE ACCOUNTABLE**

Feed my lambs. Peter "get on with what I have called you to do". You have every reason to run and hide, lick your wounds, and feel miserable about what you have done. But I'm looking for you to be a leader. To step up into your life mission and calling.

People, God entrusts us with the Kingdom. To declare it not when we have our lives all sorted and together, but in spite of our frailties, knowing that we are loveable and recoverable. He says to each of us. You have something I need. And it's YOU!

In your speech and your actions, in the gifting and skills you have, I'm calling you to the mission of the Kingdom and I am going to hold you accountable for what you do with what I've given you.

This means I have to wrestle with issues like justice and poverty, ethics and morality. It means I cannot just hide behind the skirts of other people when it comes to stating my beliefs and values. You see here's where the rubber hits the road. There isn't a story in the Bible where people get loved, rescued, and healed where they are not also commissioned and sent out to be accountable servants. Now one more thing. This is not just about you. There's a twist in the tail that's about to come. Because these four truths about you – you are loveable, recoverable, fallible, and accountable **are equally true not just of you....but of US together.**

That's where I want to finish this message today. People of Ranui Baptist Church.... We are loveable as a people, we are recoverable as a people, we are fallible as a people, and we are accountable as a people. The affection of God is upon US, His desire is after US and our future, and God's best intentions and purposes are for US. There is nothing you have done or said from which you cannot recover. God has heard everything that has been said and done over the last hundred years. The good, bad, and the ugly, and he says – it's recoverable. I know your frailties and failures. I desire so much that you will allow me to heal your bruises of the past, so you don't project onto each other your own stuff, so you don't overreact, and you don't try to protect something. Lastly, he is saying Ranui church, I'm holding you accountable for who

you are and what I have given you. You live in one of the neediest parts of Auckland city where the gospel of good news desperately needs telling. To whom much is given, much will be expected.

What kind of a church do we want to be? What core values will we adopt...we will value relationship over tradition, grace over performance, **and truth over discomfort.**

Some of you still have bruises from the past where things have been said and done which have hurt. And today God is saying – let me heal you, you need to forgive, move on. Release yourself from a prison of your own making. If you don't you're on a slippery slope where you can crash and cause hurt to yourself and others around you.

Because you are loveable, recoverable, fallible, accountable!

Why am I asking you to take a stand this morning? Because we value truth over discomfort.

This morning to finish our service. I believe the HOLY SPIRIT wants us to have a time of reflection and quiet prayer where each of us asks ourselves some questions. I will lead you through these. When I say something that God impresses on you is for you. I want you to stand and own it and in doing so, you are saying to God – Lord I'm giving this to you today.

I AM LOVEABLE – loved by God, absolutely, completely, WE ARE LOVED BY THE FATHER GOD.

I AM RECOVERABLE – right now God's grace reaches me – WE ARE RECOVERABLE as a people.

I AM FALLIBLE – I know my failings, I bring them to God –WE ARE FALLIBLE – we come today.

I AM ACCOUNTABLE – I give you myself, skills, gifts, ask you to use me, take me.