

## Giving it all to God

When I saw this topic I started to wonder what it meant to give all to God, it made me wonder what people had to give up in order to give all to God. We are given the example of the Thessalonians turning from one way of living to another – old objects of worship and devotion had gone to be replaced by single minded service of God motivated by faith, love and hope. They showed this with work, labour and endurance. They built a church and become well known. The images I showed you before can be people that we tend to praise and want to follow. We must continually choose God over 'idols' that would seek our allegiance. There is a line somewhere where these people don't become idols and we remember God and we are just recognising their achievements.

This got me thinking about my family history and the research I did a few years ago into how I, Erin Louise Winder came to being in New Zealand. I discovered that I have 9 ancestral roots to New Zealand and am a 4<sup>th</sup> generation New Zealander. I also discovered the rich and wonderful stories that came with my relations leaving Scotland, England and Wales. One of the things I got returned to me earlier was the candle holder and I am going to tie two stories into this candle holder.

The first is of John Morgan which is partly how my Grandmother, on Dads side, got to spend the first 33 years of her life in St Bathans. John came out to New Zealand from Wales in 1861, not long after Gold was discovered at Gabriel's Gully. He got off a boat in Dunedin and walked through to Lawrence and made a claim at Gabriel's Gully. In this journey he meets another Welshman. They continued onto Arrowtown and got nothing so went back down to the Maniototo. They settled at Cambrians which is on the Loop Road to St Bathans. When you google Cambrians it says it was settled by Welshmen! At Cambrians they set up a mine called the Never Fail Mine and struck Gold. It didn't look impressive like this mine, it was sluicing's in the Gully. Only when this was established and reports say it never failed did John send word to his family back in Wales to come to New Zealand. They arrived 12 years after he had left. What a lot John gave up and consequently his family for a better life in New Zealand. Why the candle holder? I like to imagine that his daughter Sarah, my Great, Great Grandma would have brought something like this with her from Wales in 1873 to go to a small cottage at Cambrians. I also like it as it looks something like Anne of Green Gables used to go to bed.

The second story ties in with where the candle holder comes from – Sovereign Hill, Ballarat, Australia. On my mum's side there were Gold miners as well, coming from Cornwall in 1850 as they were tin miners. As this side of the family is strongly Methodist this makes sense as John Wesley took his 'new' style of church to Cornwall. In 1903 after marrying in Adelaide my Great grandparents came out to New Zealand. I also know in 1910 her parents followed with 3 children to build the South Waiwera Presbyterian Church. Don't worry I did have to look this up – it's a small town between Balclutha and Clinton, that the railway line goes through. So here we have a family that gave up everything, but this time for God. They gave up 5 children who remained in Australia and joined a daughter here in Dunedin – why was Amy so special? She did look after her father until he died at the age of 95! My wedding ring is Amy's fashioned from a gold nugget found at Ballarat, she had dark curly hair and she was very religious. So the legacy of doing something for God has filtered through the generations. Here I am today working and talking in a job that I never thought I would be doing. Last year I spent some time in prayer and felt the Lord telling me He had more in store for me that was work for Him. Not long after, Roly asked me to do the Something For Everyone service.

And that has continued, I was also asked to MC the Light Party, something I am doing again this year. These are all pointers to Giving it All to God. When we pray fully ask, God works in ways beyond what we can comprehend.

Earlier I said that the main idea was giving back to God what is His. Thessalonica was a thriving seaport and was home to the goddess Roma. They had turned to God despite the persecution they would get and maintained faith, hope and love in a hostile environment. Through their actions they became the message and gave it all to God. Just as my ancestor John did, he maintained faith, hope and love for a better life and today we have people fleeing their war torn countries to come and live here to what should be a better life, again they are giving up everything to be here, a hope for the future. Do we give back to God amongst the hostility?

Beyond our church walls we are invited to become living witnesses. How do our lives tell others of what it means to be converted – this day and every day – from idolatry to authentic worship of the one true God? How have we experienced Christ's presence in our lives and in the church? In what ways do our lives proclaim that we are the message?

Lets say this prayer of confession together.

As the band plays the music to Seek you ask yourself what God wants more of you to do? If you want to be a part of Giving it all to God, fashion a pipe cleaner into the letter of your name and bring it up to place in the box up the front.