

CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY - Sam Young
26/11/17

Do you ever catch yourself saying 'I can't wait for tomorrow, I can't wait for my next holiday? I can't wait for this to be over... then... then my life will be great, not a care in the world. (What a joke) It will be great when, the kids leave home, It will be great when, I retire... it will be great when exams are over. What if instead we said, let's not wait let's do what we can to make today great, and tomorrow even greater. Let's, keep that in mind as we keep going this morning.

Pray...

You may have noticed that this Sunday is, is Christ the King Sunday. So I did a wee bit of research. I googled 'king' and apparently the king is the most important piece in a game of chess... Now as we know a king is the rightful ruler of a kingdom. For us as believers, as Christians (Christ followers) Jesus is our King, but a king like no other. When I hear the word king my mind immediately goes to people like King Henry the 8th or Queen Mary, and the likes. But when the Israelites envisaged a king they thought of David [Luke 1:32], a mighty warrior king who defeated armies, who conquered kingdoms, and made the Israelites mighty again. And they got him. But not how they would expect. Instead they got a king who first appeared as a defenceless baby, with no place to stay. A king who would not be recognised by his own people... A king who would grow up to demonstrate what His kingdom looks like. A king who loved his people, even though they did not love him, so much so that He died so that we could live.

This kingdom ushered in by Jesus is one where our love for one another outshines our differences, Where the poor would be rich, the sick be healed, where no one would feel left out. We hear all this and we think (at least I think) Man wouldn't that be great! I can't wait for that to happen. Man when I get to heaven and experience the fullness of His kingdom, wouldn't that be great. I can't wait! Then we read our passage for this morning

Matthew 25:31:45:

Jesus said, 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

Heavy isn't it... Rather than the meek and mild king we know we see a picture of king Jesus here coming in glory surrounded by angels, sitting on his throne separating the righteous from the unrighteous. He is coming back with an agenda. You see like any good king there is method to his madness; Jesus is telling this story to teach his people now.

I think our king wants us to demonstrate your kingdom now before he comes again. To understand this passage we need some context... You see here in our passage and the verses preceding we find Jesus in telling stories

(parables) to his followers about this kingdom that is to come. Explaining that we do not know when he will come again so we need to be ready.

And in the mean time we need to recognise the gifts he has given us and use them to grow his kingdom. You see this kingdom Jesus is ushering in is not something that is only in the future it is one that by the grace of God we can see today, you know that's why we pray your kingdom come, here on earth as it is in heaven, heaven come down and the likes. Because when we become aware of the Holy Spirit we get a taste of the kingdom. And one of the ways we see this kingdom out worked is by following the example of the king and loving the least of these - those that others may deem 'too hard'. But that's easier said than done right?

So this morning I want to ask and attempt to answer three questions, where do we find the least of these? And why do we need to love them? More importantly how do we love them?

So where do we find them?

When I think of 'the least' I often think those without homes, or people who are slave to drugs or alcohol or something quite obvious like that... But the more I thought about it the more I thought what about the single Mums/Dads struggling to make ends meet, or that boy or girl who is bullied at school day in and day out. I work as a receptionist at a real-estate company and when I think of the least of these there I think of the sales assistant who is sometimes reduced to tears because of the unrealistic demands that are paced upon them. When I think of the least of these in our society I think of the women who get paid less than men for the equivalent job. When I think of the least of these I think in our nation the way systemic poverty plagues us; children going to school without lunch. Notice that those who I think of changed depending on context. That's why it's important to notice verse 40... Jesus said:

'The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Jesus is giving us context... Let's start here! Let's first love the least of these in our midst.

Whenever Jesus refers to brother and sisters in Matthew it is always in reference to believers. Now please don't get me wrong I am not saying that the impoverished out there, the single mums out there, the bullied out there and all the rest are not the least of these. They definitely are - throughout scripture we see the God who loves all people and wishes to ultimately redeem and restore all people, things, social injustices and everything in between. And more than that we see the God who wishes to use us to achieve that! That is what working to see the kingdom here on earth looks like! Galatians 6.10 articulates the point I am trying to make well it says:

'Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.'

Yes by all means we need to and are commanded to love all people, but let's start here with our own family lets love the least of our brothers and sisters.

Actually just as an aside, this is something that I have already noticed in my one week here, you are a community of people who genuinely do love one another, or so it seems at the moment. Anyway let's keep it up; let's think this morning about those who are the least of these in our midst? It doesn't have to be poverty or something like that... perhaps there is someone one within our Cavy family that is stressed out with work commitments or family pressure... Perhaps you know of someone who is struggling relationally.... Perhaps you know someone whose family is going through a tough time (maybe financially or something else) Perhaps you can't think of anyone and that's okay ☺... or maybe at times you feel like the least of these... maybe you have thoughts like 'I'm going through so much rubbish right now' 'why doesn't anyone notice me?' if I'm being honest I've had thoughts like this, I'd be chatting to someone and they would be telling me there latest woe, oh my phone screen cracked and now I can't get any work done, and in my head I'm saying, if only you knew what was going on in my life right now. And to those of us who may at times think the same I would say let people know so that they might be able to help you, and to love others anyway. If we love one another then no one is left unloved.

Secondly, why do we love 'the least'? Again at this point I want to make something very clear. We do not love the least of these in order to get into heaven (to gain entrance to this kingdom that is to come. Often people have

misinterpreted this passage this way, Notice verse 46 of our passage when referring to the goats Jesus said “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous (the sheep) to eternal life.’

We do see King Jesus Judging the sheep and the goats just as he will judge us at the end but He will not judge us based on how many homeless people we gave homes, how many lost, lonely or broken people we helped. Rather we are saved (made righteous) given the ability to have eternal life; by having faith... by believing in the person of Jesus that he died and Rose again so that we might have life to the fullest. Ephesians 2:8 says ‘For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God’ However the righteous ones in our passage were those who did the good?

The King says to those who are righteous **‘I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’** But notice the surprise in the righteous’ response. They say in verse 37-39, **“Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?”** They did not recognise the works that they did. I don’t know about you but if I thought my works would get me into heaven and Jesus said you fed me and clothed me. I would probably reply yeah... pssh it was nothing even if I wasn’t sure that I did. But no these righteous believers are surprised at the work that they did.

When I was young (er) like properly younger like 10, or something, I would wake up early on mother’s day and like cook some bacon and eggs and make some coffee (if I’m honest I don’t know the details of what I did because It has been while since doing something like this but I imagine I was a pretty cute kid) anyway I would attempt to make her breakfast in bed and help her out throughout the day... why? Not because I thought if I did that she would love me more. But because I loved her and wanted her to know that I loved her.

Similarly with God, We love the least of these in our midst out of an overflow of God’s love for us and we recognise that God loves the least too. 1 John 4:19 my favourite verse says **‘we love because he first loved us’** We love the least of these not because it will get us into heaven but because we love our God so much that we cannot help but show our faith by loving others. James 2:18 says **‘Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.’** The sheep did the good out of an overflow of the faith that they had in Jesus. Maybe there is some of us here who, although know in our minds that we are saved by grace don’t feel like it. We feel like we’ve let God down and were trying desperately to get back in God’s good books, to be counted as a righteous sheep. Sadly I’ve got bad news, for those of us who are trying to do that... it won’t work, there is nothing that you could say, or do or think that will make you right with God. Our king has already made us right with him! If you recognise the love He has for you and believe in him you are the sheep! Our biggest challenge as believers is not acting right. It believes the Gospel. Could it be that there is a God with a love so scandalous, so wide, so deep, so vast, so high, so welcoming and so inclusive? Believing that there is a king who said to us let me have your sin. Our challenge is to give him that sin and to live from that place of forgiveness. When we do that we are putting our faith into action.

Once we recognise and understand that it could be that there is a God who loves us so deeply that he sent his only son to die so that we might be right with him there is nothing that we can do to gain salvation. So we love others and obey his word not out of religious duty or obligation. But for a God who loves us.

So firstly, where do we find the least of these? Well we need to start in our own church family, our brothers and sisters. Secondly, why do we love on them? Because we love our God so much that we want to show it to others, and finally:

How? How are we to love the least of our brothers and sisters?

I have three suggestions...

Firstly, we need to be on the lookout for those of us who are the least of these around us... Has anyone heard of the children’s book, where’s Wally? I’ve got a picture of it behind me if you haven’t. It’s a chaotic picture with that aim to find Wally, a man with dark hair and a stripped shirted hiding somewhere in the picture. Upon first glance there is no chance of finding him. But when we become intentional and look hard for him you find him. It’s the

same with looking for the least of these in our community. I reckon when where looking for something we have a 100% better chance of finding it than if you weren't looking at all.

Secondly, we need to be in genuine relationships with each another, and as I said earlier this is something I think you guys here at Cavy excel at but it's still something that needs to stay at the forefront of our minds. We need to be in genuine relationship with one another so that we might have enough trust between each other to let each other into our lives. To have vulnerable conversations with one another to be able to say, actually my week has been rubbish, I know that I am loved but honestly I don't feel it right now. Maybe you're the one feeling the 'least' at the moment and all you want is someone else to come and help you... in order to do that you need to be able to tell God and tell others about how you're feeling. That requires relationship... That's why being a commented member of a church like this is so important; Church is a place of genuine relationship where you're like family to each other. I reckon there is a reason that Jesus calls us brothers and sisters... I think it's because we are to be like family to one another. This week I have had the privilege of meeting some of your Caversham family - Bill & Dorothy Marsden, Elsie Clark and Elva Ball up at the local rest homes. What a privilege it was to be able to hear stories of God using people here at Caversham Baptist and hearing some vulnerabilities and fears that some have. That is how genuine relationship is formed - in environments where others feel safe enough to share openly and honestly with one another.

Thirdly, let's be people who encourage each other whenever we get the opportunity. You never know when someone may need encouragement. And it's as easy as hey ____, you're doing an awesome job! Sometimes I reckon people need to hear biblical truths things like:

You are a masterpiece created in God's image
You are loved
You are a child of God
For God so loved you - that he gave his only son for you.

So some of the ways we can love others practically are to be intentional about looking for 'the least', to be in genuine relationship with one another, and encourage each other whenever we get the chance.

I'm someone who likes to dream, I'm not so good at the details but I love to dream, What if we as brothers and sisters could continue to help the least of these but not just continue; what if we could be a people who are known for the love that we have for one another particularly the down and out, the least?

Could we be a community of people who understand how much God loves us so much so that we cannot help but share it with others?

Could we be a community that is always on the lookout for the least around us? So much so that will have to love the least of these in our society, neighbourhoods, nation because there will be no one feeling least in here!

Could we be a people who show our faith that saves us by loving one another, not because it's easy or people are fun to be around (even though they may be) but because God first loved us? Let's not say I can't wait until we become known for the love we have for one another, let's be the sheep the follow the example of our King, the lamb and put our faith into action.

Benediction: Christ the King Sunday

It is not enough to acclaim Jesus Christ
as our Lord and King.
Our mission in life is
to make his kingdom a reality among us
and to bring it to those around us
by our words and deeds.

The way to do this is to live as he lived:
for others, in love and service.

May almighty God bless you for this task:
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit? **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
and to give shape to his kingdom. **Thanks be to God!**