

Posture Is Everything

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[0 : 00] Hi, I don't know whether you've experienced this, but maybe it's one of my Room 101 moments, but the phone rings, you pick it up, and you are greeted by this really, really chirpy, buoyant person who introduces themselves as though they've known you all your life.

And immediately on my own races, you think, who could this be? Could this be this long-lost relative that I don't know about who is just phoning me up to say, I've just heard your sermon, and I think what you do at Christchurch is amazing as a church, and I'm just going to give half of everything I own to the life and ministry of Christchurch. Wouldn't that be great? But no, they say those words, are you the homeowner? It's then that you realise that they aren't that rich, affluent person, but they are about to sell you something. And if like me, you are that great pinnacle of virtue at moments like this, you are very polite, and you say thank you so much, while they're still reading off their script, but not at the moment, and you leave the call, and you return to the dinner that they've just interrupted. What's this got to do with the art of neighbouring? Well, this week's theme is about posture. Posture is everything. This week's theme about is motive and transparency in our discipleship, or our Christian apprenticeship. Let's be honest, we've all experienced some pretty cringy moments, where Christians who have slipped maybe a Bible tract into our hand, and then with the breath that could floor an elephant said something that may have been laid on their hearts, but the way in which it was given and executed made us want to run a mile.

As the writers of our series say, when it comes to the art of neighbouring, if evangelism is your sole and only motive in befriending your neighbour, then it probably, you probably won't make a very good neighbour. However, if your neighbouring is done with the right posture, the right intention, the right attitude or view, then you stand a pretty good chance of your neighbour seeing and experiencing the God-given life that you're living out in the every day that has prompted and hastened you to do life with your neighbour, and encouraged you to do that. You know, I've sat through many sermons on today's scripture, and coming as it does in the midst of the Sermon on the Mount, this significant teaching that Jesus is giving and sharing, many of people are hearing this for the first time, and it's radical stuff. We realise that when we get this message in this passage that Jesus is giving us, that motive matters. And I can talk about salt preserves, and people knew that when they heard that in the culture in which Jesus was talking, especially if the saltiness was lost, they couldn't regain it. In fact, Jesus was using the analogy that they understood in a culture where it was so hot that salt was used to preserve things.

But what does this scripture mean for you and me today? Maybe in the season, we have done amazing things for others, our neighbours. We've queued in the cold to get prescriptions, we've cooked meals, we've done shopping, we've spent hours on the phone to those who are alone and needed that call.

And that will be their enduring memory of you in the months and hopefully years to come of being a nice person. But Jesus, as we know, was more than a nice person. People didn't flock to that hillside to hear this message to see a celebrity rabbi or just a nice person. Jesus had far more to share and they knew that. That's why disciples dropped everything and followed Jesus. Jesus had something to offer that nobody else could. And that is life in all its fullness. I really hope you get on well with people.

[4 : 30] And because of your discipleship, they see the good and the Jesus in you. But do they know that your drive and reason isn't to hit them over the head with a Bible or to convert them into a tradition?

No, it's because we are Christian, we are a disciple, we are a follower of Jesus, that we aren't ever in the hit and run business. We are here for the long haul. And with some people, that's a very long haul indeed, as you may know. And unlike some agencies who are really, really well-meaning and

do some great stuff and have responded to the pandemic, we will be here. We as a church will be here in three, 10, 20 and 50 years, well into the future when other short-term relief setups have moved on and in history.

You see, that's the beauty of us, the church, the beauty of you and I, God's people, that we are here to stay. We are the presence of saltiness and light, flavouring and lighting the community. We are called to serve with God's presence, grace and love in every season. A city on a hill cannot be hidden, literally on a hill.

You know, Christ's church is on a hill. Christ's church, God's people, set high, a light set to illuminate across the town, bringing reassurance and fresh hope in the darkness.

We are a people that don't want to be just seen maybe on the one show, getting an award for our good deeds, have pictures in the paper, handing over checks. No, the things that we do are seen in the greater kingdom of God. We are here because our motive is to be that enduring essence of his light and presence to our neighbours, our community, in our relationships, to do what makes us distinctive and different from the good things that others do, which is to share the gospel.

[6 : 56] To share the gospel in our posture, in our character, our love for our neighbour that is the same enduring love that Jesus has for us. It's so easy to lose your saltiness, isn't it, as a Christian?

Maybe especially in these last 12 months, maybe our past commitment was, ah, I'm both feet in. Which, as the year has gone on, has maybe become one foot out. And before you know it, maybe I'm just barely dipping my toe in to the commitment I made a few years back.

We can get wrapped up in doing neighbourly things, being kind, fulfilling an earthly agenda, and suddenly realise that with the best of intentions, it's been without God at the centre of our lives, of our posture. You know, we have made the great commission, God's given us that, the great commission, to make disciples. And yet, as Dallas Willard says in his book, sometimes we made that the great omission. Great book recommendation, Mike. I'm really into it. It's fantastic.

Jesus said, you are the lights of the world. You are the light of the world. Perhaps that's why I love the church, the church, God's people.

We love the church so much with all our gifting, our diversity of skills, our fallen ways. But we, as we regather, as we regather again over the coming months, there will be many, many people coming through the doors of our church again. And they will come for various reasons. And many will be there to remember and mark the memorial of a loved one and light candles. From September, we will be setting times aside in the week for those services. And as that light, as people come one by one, the light grows brighter. Our neighbours, the ones who we have made relationships with, who have said to us, oh, when the church reopens, I'd love to come along. Or could I go? Can I come and light a candle for my husband, my wife, my colleague, whoever? And they will see the power and light of Christ shining in the darkness that is shown through you and in you and shining in their darkness and bringing hope and life to their lives in the power of God and the power of his Holy Spirit.

[9 : 38] Let's ensure that as we return as a gathered church and bring people with us, that they have seen the light of Christ in us, that they have heard about Jesus, not about tradition, about Jesus. And through his love in us and the fruit of that love in our lives, they will have life in all its fullness.

Let's ensure that we are in our lives. If you need today to lift your light that has been hidden away, then ask God to put it back where it belongs, at the forefront of everything that we do in our character, in our encouragement, in our kindness, in our love and in our neighbouring. I encourage you to do that today. You see, we never have to sell Jesus because he's already paid the price. And that's why our saltiness remains salty. And his light shines so brightly in us and through us. Let's just pause and pray as we reflect on today's theme and today's scripture.

I just sensed when I was preparing this that there are those who had said maybe, I'm both feet in, and yet realised that they are one foot out.

And yet who long to live that both feet life in again, just ask him to show you where that is. And to restore that, that zeal and that light and that saltiness into your life.

[11 : 09] And there was a words of a worship song that came that said, lead me to the cross where we first met. And maybe that those words from Delirious from that song resonate with you today.

Lead me to the cross where we first met. Take me back to that place where I really fell in love with you, Jesus, where I really, really made that commitment to apprenticeship with you for life.

I pray that the Holy Spirit would come now and fill you afresh and that you would know that both feet in moment again. Let's pray together. Jesus, you are the light of the world.

God, shine brightly as I pray daily in my discipleship. Help me in my lifelong apprenticeship to you and to my neighbours.

Help me to hold that light high. And if I've hidden away, if I've neglected it, gone from both feet into one foot out or worse, I pray that I've hidden away from my neighbour. And may our heart and life posture be that of grace and love.

[12 : 31] And show me who my neighbour is, just in case, just in case I've missed something in your calling. And the blessing of God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all those who we love and are called to love, this day and evermore. Amen.