

United Community Living

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Preacher: Rev. Clive Jennings

[0 : 0 0] isn't it, that scripture and you go, yes, yes, that's what it should look like. And what an amazing picture that we were given in that reading of the early church, of that something that was new, something that was exciting. And the Lord added to the number that day. That raised two questions for me, two questions here this morning. What was the personal cost and what was the challenge? So what is the cost and what is the challenge of following Jesus?

Firstly, the cost. Put this in context. The disciples had been in this three year of transition. They had left the things, everything that they had found security in. They'd left their fishing, they had left their jobs, he'd left his job as a tax collector, and they had dropped that to follow Jesus.

Everything that they had trusted and known in, they went to follow this person and have this amazing experience. They went both feet in and had the most extraordinary time with Jesus. Cost and challenge.

I mean, you know, who wouldn't, who wouldn't want that daily walk with Jesus? You know, you walk into somewhere and all of a sudden there's people being healed. You walk into people, they're crowding in and suddenly you find, you feed all these people. Who wouldn't want to be around that? Well, you wake up in the morning and you think, so what next are we going to do today? But sadly, so many Christians, disciples today, I don't see with that same enthusiasm. Somehow it isn't, we've lost that closeness of walk with Jesus, that expectation of great things going to happen. They had given up so much. This was about sacrifice and yet I see so many of my colleagues and friends that actually, when the rubber hits the road, it's bye-bye Jesus. Because suddenly it just got a little bit too tough for them. The thing I love about the disciples is that they had stickability. You know, the majority of the disciples had suffered. Last week we heard about where they were all taken off to be flogged, you know, and this wasn't just a little sort of tap on the wrist. This was sort of like, you know, a proper flogging. You know, bone on leather, right down your back, into your bottom.

That was it. There was no messing. This was a proper flogging. And it said, and the next day they went out and they couldn't stop them preaching. You know, I don't know about you, there's been times in my life where a little something's got under my nose in church and I've wanted to give it all up. It doesn't give anything to the perspective of these people in the early church where the rubber hit the road and they couldn't help but tell people about Jesus. It's because of that closeness that they were walking with. And timid, retiring, scared people that went out and just shared it. I don't know whether you were here last week. But, you know, Jim courageously got up here and shared with people how a year ago he'd been sat there just in the congregation thinking, do you know what, this transforming lives for good, you know, the last thing that is on my mind is to go in to a school and spend an hour a week transforming not only that child's life but wider thing. I know 22 others of you, 23 are there at the moment by that. Hugely courageous. This was life-changing stuff where you step out.

[3 : 59] You know, and here they said that it was transformed. It was changed. People's lives were changed. I've known people who have said, well, what does that actually mean for me? Maybe this morning is that decision time where you're going to think about that transformation in our cultural thinking.

It does miff me a bit when week after week people stand and say, do you think you could help with this?

Please. And in this early church, they didn't have to ask. People just shared. They couldn't wait to share. Hospitality was at the top of their list. And generosity of hospitality. They just sold houses.

They gave away what they had. They didn't have to wait. And I know I want to encourage you because the cultural shift in Christchurch is that is changing. Because I am hearing great stories about people who are having meals sent to them who have been, haven't even been part of the church.

And they'll say, my goodness, I've just had meals brought to me. How does that happen? Do you know what? I've had somebody that's dropped an amount of money through my door. And I didn't even ask for that. But it was exactly what I needed. What is it about these Christians? What is it about this church? What is it about this that they give up an hour a week? What is it that they give up this and give up that? Because it's about what the early church looked like. And we need to get back to that place of expectation, excitement, and walking closely with Jesus. Most of the rest of what I was going to say today has gone out of the window because of Peter in our tech up at the top.

[5 : 53] Because when I arrived here this morning, Pete is playing a track. I've never heard of this track before. And it was just amazing. And I thought, do you know what? I'm listening to the words as I'm doing stuff here. And I thought, do you know what? That sounds like the early church to me.

That sounds, and we're going to listen to that at the end. But I want you to think what it means about sharing. Because in that early church, the challenge and the cost of his sharing is that. And I think what it means to me is that the church is going to be doing. And sometimes it's nice that it is, but I don't want to be seen shaking somebody's hand, handing over a check.

I don't want to be seen, because I think Jesus said something about that, about seeing our good works, but he sees them and everybody else doesn't have to. Do we get that? Yeah, people are nodding.

You know, it's that personal thing. I think this clip says a lot for me. Enjoy. Now I have to make a big song and dance over it. It's just seeing it. And Jesus helps us see it.

There was in the early church, people just went for it because they wanted to see the kingdom. And isn't that our job, that we want to see more of the kingdom? I was just thinking back along, the thing that gets in the way is suspicion. And we all get suspicion. The suspicion is, I get a new phone and they give you a free tablet. They didn't give me this free. But you get a free tablet. Now you and I know that through the charges and everything, that we're actually paying for this. You know, that's the suspicion, isn't it?

[7 : 43] The suspicion is, is that I know that there's something behind. I know the suspicion is in church that we can or we won't give freely because maybe years ago I disagreed with the colour of the chairs that people chose, so I'm not going to give anymore. Or I'm not going to give anymore because I want to give my money to fixing the clock, but I'd rather give my money to the clock than I'd see people's lives saved in school. And so I don't give anymore. And there's all this suspicion that's around. I didn't see that in the early church. The early church didn't say, they didn't say, it's not, they knew it's not my money. It's not my preference. It's not about me.

It's about him because it's all about him. And that's what it is. And the Lord added to their number 3,000 in one day because people saw it. They saw the generosity. You see, in this Actitude Church, we are called to shape the culture. And we will shape the culture of this nation. I've been away at New Wine. What I was really encouraged with is that I've been saying for a long time, and along with many of you here, I feel a sense of urgency. I feel a fresh sense of urgency of people, of God, people coming back to meet with Jesus. And we all think, though, we're suspicious about that.

It isn't. But I think as Rob Parson said, you know, it's very true that when the house is full of God's love, the people will come home. And I think we're seeing that. We're seeing a shift in culture and change. You see, you rarely see people saved unless they have encountered the radical, sacrificial, and empowering love of God which lives in us all. And somehow, I think we got it wrong.

And what I'm going to do is invite you this morning because, like me, maybe you've been a Christian for years. And somehow, you did the stuff. We all got, we did the stuff. And we built on it, we grew it, and we did it. Button by button. And then suddenly, we got to a point and realized, actually, it didn't fit, and it didn't look right.

The early church had to start at the beginning. And for me, often, I built my faith on tradition. I built my faith on the trappings of the church rather than Jesus. And the early church had that, didn't have a choice. This scripture was written by people that had known him and loved him.

[10 : 44] And so, sometimes, I think this message for this morning is some of us need to unbutton some of that stuff and to start again with Jesus. Because when you do, somehow, it fits and looks a lot better to the people that we're seeking to reach. I just want to encourage you this morning, because everything else I was going to say, I've thrown out the window.

Because I think the message is that simple. And I just want to encourage anyone this morning that if you'd got mixed up like I did many years ago, and it was all about everything else rather than Jesus, then you're not going to get very far, and it doesn't look very good. But there is always an opportunity to say, I come back to you afresh and show me what that's like, whether I've been a Christian for years or whether today is the first day.

Track this morning that the Lord just led. Holy Spirit, would you come? Would you come amongst us? Thank you, Lord Jesus.