**Transformation 8 March 2020**

**Intro**

I have been quite amazed these last couple of months by how God is using people in the church in different ways.

* Some are having opportunity to reach out to others through initiatives our charity is involved with
* others are having new opportunities to make a difference to people’s lives through their work
* still others are ministering to folk through more church related activities

Those of you who follow what God says to the church here week in week out, will be aware that God has spoken to us numerous times from the book of Joshua.

Well, the last two thirds of the book of Joshua documents:

* God defeating His enemies
* the people of God taking more and more land from the enemy
* and occupying it as their inheritance.

And God is showing Steve and I more opportunities which I believe God wants the church to take up in the months ahead.

* The connections,
* the people He is bringing into our lives
* and the openings He is giving us…… are very exciting indeed.

More details of those things to come as they develop.

……So, on the one hand, I am being bowled over by God

* at what He is showing us
* and where He is leading us.

On the other hand, achieving anything of worth these days, whether it’s

* getting a new kitchen installed so we can reach a new cohort of people with the love of Jesus
* or counselling those struggling with their mental health,
* or connecting with those who have addictions
* or chasing the necessary paperwork to get people out of debt
* or researching and digging out the historical influences that still affect our town today
* or supporting ladies who are trapped in abusive relationships
* or serving the sick
* or looking after others
* or praying faithfully for those doing everything I’ve just mentioned

achieving anything of worth is **exhausting**!!

And I’m aware that the last 2 weeks, God has highlighted the parable where it says “the Master went away on a **long** journey”

My spiritual Father (Dr. Patterson) once told me that being a follower of Jesus isn’t a sprint, it’s a marathon!

And last week’s message was all about being fruitful and effective. And there were **so many** things that prevented the seed that was sown from reaching the good soil where it could bear fruit.

So, given that:

1. I believe God has a lot more ground He wants us to take as a church

And by that I mean bringing solutions to issues in society where the devil is currently destroying lives

* domestic violence
* sickness
* homelessness
* loneliness
* debt
* addictions
* poverty
* unemployment

He wants his church to bring solutions that will set people free and bring them into a relationship with their Father God and into fullness of life

But

- achieving anything worthwhile takes significant time and effort

- Christianity is like a marathon

- loads of stuff can get in the way of us being fruitful

**Q = What does God want us to learn today?**

A = the Scripture verse God gave me is this

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind”

**“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and self-discipline”**

In the parable of the talents, when the Master went away on a long journey and gave his 3 servants gifts and abilities that he wanted them to invest in and use to bear fruit

 – the thing that stopped the 3rd servant investing in the gifts God had given him was fear

He said “I knew you to be a hard man and I was afraid”

**Lesson 1 = Fear = crippling**

**– you won’t come into all that God has got for you if you’re afraid / anxious**

Christina challenged me about something in my life this week which shows I’m not fully trusting God in that area.

& I know why, it’s because of a bad experience I’ve had

Fear often comes after a bad experience of something

But! “God has not given us a spirit of fear.”

Romans 8 says “The Holy Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Holy Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.(You’re adopted as a child of God now)

And by him we cry, *“Abba,* Father.” (Dad!)The Holy Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ”

Q = what do you worry about, get anxious about, not fully trust God with?

God wants you to hear today that you are a co-heir with Jesus, of everything His and your heavenly Father God owns!

Just think how that will change our outlook and behaviour if we really get to grips with that truth!

**“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind”**

God has given us power!

As part of the developments here with the coffee shop and the emergency pods for rough sleepers, we have had to get the electricity supply increased.

I’m rubbish at physics but I have learnt much over the last month about electricity!

And the most basic thing = if you want power, you have to be connected to the source!

And if you want more power, you have to have a greater connection!

Q = What is your connection with Jesus like?

Intermittent?

On and off?

Barely enough to sustain what you do now?

If God is going to use us more to reach more people, be the answer for more of society’s problems…..we will not be up to the task, unless our connection with Jesus is strong.

It’s the power of God that makes the difference in peoples lives, otherwise what we do is futile.

John 15: 4-7 Jesus said “Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

**God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind**

God has given us a spirit of love

I found this very comforting, to learn that God has given us a spirit of love.

Do you know why?

* Because people can be hard work!

Being filled with God’s Spirit of love—the defining characteristic of Christians—will make us capable of loving others.

Think about where you most interact with people for a moment

* It may be in work, or ministry or your family or through church

God says he gives us a spirit that……

 “always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres, never fails”

“is a safe place of shelter, for it never stops believing the best for others, never takes failure as defeat, never gives up.”

“bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

**God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind**

God has given you a sound mind.

Paul who wrote this to Timothy in a letter, was like a spiritual father to Timothy.

Paul was in prison at the time, facing execution, he’d really suffered because he preached Jesus

and his advice to a younger man, from his prison cell was:

* Never be ashamed
* Nor be embarrassed
* & overcome every evil

Suffering, shame, embarrassment, whatever other evils you may have experienced…… God has given you a sound mind.

A sound mind has thoughts based on the wisdom and clarity that God gives rather than being controlled by fear.

You guard it 2 ways:

1. By praying

Philippians 4:6 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1. By purity

whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” [Philippians 4:6–8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%204.6%E2%80%938)

**Conclusion**

Being a Christian is about being a follower of Jesus Christ

All of us here, at one time made a decision to follow Jesus, how are we doing with that?

His life was one of

* being totally in tune with His Father / had an uninterrupted connection
* self-sacrifice, He gave his life as a ransom for many

To follow Him, we must allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, reshaping and transforming not just how we think, but who we are.