

Greenway's Benefice Weekly Devotional (No 27)
Sunday 20th September 2020

Bible Reading:

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Authentic Evangelism

The 2020 Olympic Games were unfortunately cancelled this year due to Covid 19 with the prestigious tournament due to have taken place in Tokyo on July 24th. Hopefully it will be rescheduled for next year.

One race that always uniquely captures the suspense of the crowd is the relay race. In which one runner passes the baton onto another in a marked exchange zone. The outcome of the race is greatly determined by this being done successfully.

The Apostle Paul was very clear about one thing he was called to preach the gospel!

In his letter to the Thessalonians he declares that he has been approved and entrusted to faithfully speak the message of God. V4.

Like a runner Paul was carrying the good news that he would pass on to others.

In ancient Greece the word euangelion was used to describe the bringing of good news, it was also later used to describe the gospel.

Euangelion means Good message! It wasn't until later in post apostolic times that the word gospel was applied to the first four books of the New Testament.

It has been said that really there are five gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the Christian.

Although many people have never read these books, they can get to read the message of the gospel every time they meet a true believer.

Like those early Christian's we are called to carry the Gospel message to those that God is preparing.

Think about how important our role is in sharing what we have received with others!

As we look at the first Christians we can see that the good news of Christ spread quickly across the entire region, through the first Missionaries and Apostles who were commissioned and sent by the church to take the gospel out Acts 13:1-3.

Evangelism is more than just building bridges with people, it is the verbal declaration of God's message of salvation through Christ. It is making accessible the offer of God's relationship of forgiveness, restoration and eternal life to all who receive and confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Rom 10:9

In the letter to the Thessalonians we see the effective power of the good news changing lives.

We notice that in spite of the opposition that Paul and Silas had experienced previously in Phillipi here they are again preaching in Thessalonica v2.

Their obedience and single mindedness resulted in great blessing as many people turned to God and became followers of the Lord, but it was not without opposition.

We see in Paul's ministry, times of fruitfulness alongside trials and opposition.

But he is able to say that their visit to Thessalonica was not in vain as they spoke the message with boldness v1

Here in this passage he goes onto celebrate the heart of their evangelistic endeavour in describing their ministry. v7,8,11

It was with the correction and faithfulness of a father to his children, and gentle like the cherishing affection of a nursing mother for the infant at her breast, that they ministered to these new Christians.

We see in this Apostle at Thessalonica all the devotion of a friend who is ready to devote his life for those whom he loves, all the watchfulness of a faithful pastor, to whom "each one" of his flock is the separate object of individual care. Wow what a heart!

Their arrival in the city was no accident in fact they were heading in another direction when the Holy Spirit redirected their journey through a vision to go to Macedonia Acts 16:6-10.

It is certainly true that you can only steer a ship when it is moving.

It should also be an encouraging thought that God can guide each one of us when we are willing to step out in our conversations to those who are ready to hear and receive God's love in Christ.

Paul & Silas had received specific guidance to go to the people of Thessalonica and here these two missionaries planted the gospel which started to spread across southern Europe.

Perhaps we also are excited at the possibilities that God wants to use our testimony to bring another person to Christ. But we are finding it difficult to get alongside someone to tell them about Jesus.

There are three areas that are a challenge for Christians sharing the gospel.

Fear -

There is nothing unusual about being afraid but if we allow it, the fear of man will become a snare to us and hinder us. The antidote is to replace fear by meditating on what God says in his word.

Prov29:25 1JN4:18

We don't know how -

Paul imparted spiritual gifts and encouraged his companions in ministry. We can partner with other Christians who are witnessing and learn how to share the ABC of the gospel. Alongside our own personal testimony of the Lord this is a powerful message that will direct people to Christ.

Jesus said, follow me and I will make you fishers of men Matt 4:19.

We lack power -

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they were bold in preaching the message and that their gospel came in power. Ch 1:5

Acts 1:8 promises that God will give us His power to be His witnesses. Ask God for the infilling of the Holy Spirit, receive this wonderful blessing ,and step out in faith!

So evident was the impact of the gospel at Thessalonica that these believers were known for their faith in God across the whole region.

They had received the 'Baton' from Paul which they were passing on to others.

People in a relay race have a window of opportunity to pass on the 'baton'. The exchange zone area is marked out for us, let's take the opportunity while its here!

Blessings Neil