

## Words of Encouragement

October 14<sup>th</sup> 2015

---

**'The non-committed have no right to ask any questions.'** Helmut Thielicke

---

**Does Our Moral Climate Encourage Real Faith In Christ?** I doubt that many Christians in Australia today make the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:5-42 their regular daily reading, especially the words of verse 22 which say: *'And all nations will hate you because you are my followers. But everyone who endures to the end will be saved.'* Maybe the Christians and others - men, women and children fleeing right now today for their lives in the Middle East, enduring the trauma we see just a very little of on our screens, are learning something, we haven't as yet understood, of the hard reality behind these words of Jesus. Those who have not fled, or could not flee, no doubt understand Jesus' words in very stark reality! We watch with horror when we see the dead body of one young child lifted from the edge of the surf, yet we close our minds to the literally thousands of terrified, yet incredibly loved by God children, being drowned, raped, enslaved, butchered by bomb, bullet and knife by others apparently devoid of any humanity or knowledge of God.

So! What is our response? We are thankful that such things happen far away from us! **Yet, we are very much a part of the same small world.** A world blinded and corrupted by unChristlike selfishness. Have we forgotten so quickly all those who died attempting to escape from Vietnam after that senseless conflict? The men, women and children robbed, raped and murdered attempting to reach the 'safety' of Thailand! Robbed, raped and murdered by who? The thousands drowned attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea over recent years, never mind the thousands being raped, murdered or enslaved in Eastern and central Africa. The careless poisoning of land around the world by mining and chemical companies, including in Australia! And the list could go on and on. The two simple questions in this shocking mess are: **'Where are the Christians?'** and **'Why are WE so silent?'** Are we even aware of the power we have to be praying in the name Jesus against ALL such horrors? Are we aware of our ability 'in Christ' to be waging effective spiritual warfare against ALL evil, be it in our homes, next door or in another country? Are we aware of our responsibility to be speaking out against ALL crimes against God's creation!

A. W. Tozer said (The Divine Conquest' quoted in the reading for 4th Sept in 'Renewed Day By Day'): *'There is a plain and evident fact in genuine Christianity that is often overlooked by eager evangelists bent on getting results: that to accept Christ it is necessary that we reject and keep on rejecting whatever is contrary to Him!'* So, let's not be shocked by the admission that there are some disadvantages (from our perspective) to living the 'in Christ' life! Everyone through history who has honestly lived for Christ has suffered some loss, and endured some pain that they might have avoided by simply laying down their 'cross'. How much of today's horror, has, and is facilitated by Christians who have either failed to take up their cross, or having taken it up, have laid it down again and walked away because of their unwillingness to pay the personal price? If you have any doubts about this please read any history book, and also become aware of what is occurring in the 'NOW' around the world, including in Australia.

Today's spiritual climate, both within and outside the Christian Church, does not favour a Christian faith as tough and fibrous as that taught by our Lord Jesus and His apostles. (Any exceptions to this would be in countries where Christians are currently suffering persecution!) Today's delicate, brittle saints, the product of religious hothouses in 'Western' nations are hardly to be compared with the committed, expendable believers who once gave their living witness

wherever they were. Many of us 'Christians' today deny our faith daily simply through our self-centred way of life, never mind as the result of pressure from others. Voluntary spiritual blindness and deafness are rampant among those identifying as 'Christian' to the extent that the identity of 'Christian' is in danger of becoming a worthless identification despite a skyrocketing need for such people right across the planet. A great deal of the basic responsibility lies with 'Christian' leaders who tell people what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear according to the Word of God. Isn't it ironic that they may very be Christian 'leaders' because they tell people what the people want to hear instead of what they need to hear! Timidity and self-interest are a curse on the Christian Church. The outcome being that people are asked to give to God that which costs them little or nothing! And people accept such teaching because Jesus Christ has been removed from his central place in the Christian Church! Yes, he is still there, but off somewhere at the side, on display, but out of the way of the multiple other human based things that really matter in humanly 'successful' ministry!

When will Christians learn that to love righteousness it is necessary to hate all sin? (NOT to hate the sinner, who is to be loved). That to accept Christ it is necessary to reject self (selfishness)! That to follow the good way we must flee from all evil (refusing to partner with any evil-doing/evil attitudes)! That a friend of the worlds ways is an enemy of God! There is no twilight zone here where the fearful and the doubting may take refuge from hell to come and the rigours of present 'in-Christ' discipline! Hell from such unChristlike attitudes is already here! Every Christian is to be seeking a personal growing love for God, a personal growing love for all fellow believers, and a personal growing love for all those not yet reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

So? Where are the radical, revolutionary, counter-cultural Christians who identify with the radical, revolutionary, counter-cultural Jesus Christ? *'And all nations will hate you because you are my followers. Everyone who endures to the end will be saved.'* Why will Christians be hated? Because they have enough faith in Jesus Christ to plant their feet and say a clear 'NO!' to what God's Word says is wrong/evil, even when it might be to their benefit to go with the flow.

.....  
*'We must know where to doubt, where to feel certain, where to submit. He/she who does not do so, understands not the force of reason.'* Blaise Pascal

.....  
In his book *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer says to us: 'By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world. The sooner this shock of disillusionment comes to an individual and to a community, the better for both.'

*Lord Jesus, thank You for giving us glimpses of the life You intend for us to live. Show us how our individual lives are entwined with those around us, and help us to live so truly together with them and with You, that we embody Your good news in this world for the sake of all those we have contact with.*

.....  
*'The highest of all is not to understand the highest but to act upon it.'* Soren Kierkegaard

.....  
.....  
Thank you Lord Jesus, for the witness of women, like Ester, who understood themselves only in relation to their communities of faith. Grant us such a heart, and a similar mindset! Strengthen us with the joy of all those saints who have gone before us, that like them we might stand up to the powers that threaten your kingdom both within and outside the Christian Church. Amen  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
*'We are worthy of being believed only as we (are) aware of our unworthiness'* Karl Barth  
*'Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things.'* 2 Timothy 2:7  
*'Everyone enjoys a fitting reply; it is wonderful to say the right thing at the right time!'* Proverbs 15:23  
*'I have chosen to be faithful; I have determined to live by your regulations. I cling to your laws. Lord, don't let me be put to shame! I will pursue your commands, for you expand my understanding.'* Psalm 119:32  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
**Have you found the above to be thought provoking, stimulating and encouraging? If so, forward it on to some others right now! God bless you! Bill**  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
**A Blessing of Solitude**

*May you recognise in your life the presence,  
power and light of your soul.*

*May you realise that you are never alone  
that your soul in its brightness and belonging  
connects you intimately with the rhythm of the  
universe.*

*May you have respect for your own individuality  
and difference.*

*May you realise that the shape of your soul  
is unique,  
that you have a special destiny here  
that behind the facade of your life there is some-  
thing beautiful, good and eternal happening.  
May you learn to see your self with the same  
delight, pride and expectation with which God  
sees you in every moment.*

John O'Donohue *Anam Cara*, Transworldbooks, ISBN 978-0-55350-4  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
**Every Christian is expected to be radical, revolutionary and counter-cultural, just as Jesus Christ was and is! And every local Christian church ought to be similar!**  
.....