

What does the Spirit say to the Churches – Responding to need in our
Community

or What does the Spirit of God say to YOU??

Have you ever stopped to wonder.... 'What is God saying to ME?'
I sure have, as I wander through this 'wonderscape' of my life....

Though the bigger question may be – What is the Spirit saying to the
Churches? Or... Is it the same thing??

Let me set the scene, which has become my life – a few months before I
turned 6, I was at a Salvation Army open air meeting, band playing,
timbrels tinkling, voices singing and me standing down the road a tad –
telling God how much I hated having to go along to these stupid things
and that I was never doing it again – God must have been sitting under a
tree laughing out loud at such a small girl, telling Him what she would
and wouldn't do - And then a voice said from on high – Jane, you will be
following me all the days of your life and giving time to those who need
you.....and here I am 54 years later, still doing that which He called me
out on – walking with the unlovely, the unloved, the hungry, poor and
ailing, the abused and the abuser – all who are so worthy of love and
care and concern, respect and dignity. From school I would bring home
those who needed a friend. On the way home from school I would sit in
the gutter with the homeless & alcoholics until my Dad would come and
get me for my tea. I have walked alongside the beaten and abused,
survivors of assault, young men struggling with crime and addiction,
people who needed a listening ear – and now I am blessed to be
working in a role I LOVE: walking with, loving on, listening to, chatting
with; those in our very own Community, who need someone to see them
and hear them. Someone to care and give time. Someone to show
LOVE. And it is the easiest and most amazing thing I could ever do. I
don't see beauty or unloveliness; I don't see dirt or grime. What I do see
is people, a person, a family. A person worthy of my Father's Love, so
therefore worthy of my love. I am faithful to my calling, just as Jesus was
faithful to His – death on a cross, which has given US life. Not just my
life, but all who will call upon His name.

Same AS HE ALWAYS has been down through the ages

So, what is the Spirit saying -

Proverbs 29 v7 tells us -The righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge.

Therefore, how much more we the righteous of the Lord should be listening to that still small voice, that roaring of the wind or sea voice, the reading of the scriptures voice, the praying voice, the cry of a child voice. However we hear it, wherever or whenever we hear it – we must be faithful and do as the voice of our Lord asks. And yes, He always asks – it may sound like a demand or feel like something extra on top of all the other stuff, but it is always an ask. He has given us a choice – yet what mark does the choice we make, leave on our soul?

Our Community is rife with homelessness, dejection, families in crisis, lives on the brink, abuse, frightened souls, lost souls, the ‘unlovely’ and unloved – but what can we do?

There is much we can do, but we are not quite asking the right question – I believe it should be – ‘What CAN’T we do?’

We can’t turn a blind eye, we can’t refuse to see, we can’t let someone else deal with it, we can’t.....you can fill in the blanks.

Of course, we can do all these CAN’T things and walk away – but is that what we really should do? Is that what the Spirit is saying to the churches – and it is WE who are the church of God, all those who believe in Jesus and walk with Him every day.

Let us look at what the Bible says to us and then let us listen for the Spirit’s prompting in our lives. Let us use the ‘ears’ of our heart, our soul, our spirit, to discern what the Lord is saying through the Holy Spirit. From beginning to end, the Bible gives us direction in how we must help – the poor, the needy, the widow, the orphan, our neighbour, our friend.

Revelation 3 v22 The one whose heart is open, let him listen carefully to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Deuteronomy 15 vv10 – 11 Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow *Community members*, who are poor and needy in your land.

Esther 9 v22b He wrote for them to observe the days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one and other, and gifts to the poor.

Psalms 72 vv12a & 13b He will care for the needy and neglected when they cry to Him for help. ...for their lifeblood is precious in His eyes.

Proverbs 19 v17 Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord and He will reward them for what they have done.

Proverbs 21 v13 If you close your heart to the cries of the poor, then I'll close my ears when you cry out to me.

Proverbs 22 v9 When you are generous to the poor, you are enriched with blessings in return.

Proverbs 28 v27 You will never go without if you give to the poor. But if you're heartless, stingy, and selfish, you invite curses upon yourself.

Isaiah 58 v10 And if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday.

Matthew 25 v35 & 40 For when you saw me hungry, you fed me. When you found me thirsty, you gave me drink, When I had no place to stay, you invited me in, and when I was poorly clothed, you covered me. When I was sick, you tenderly cared for me and when I was in prison, you visited me. When you cared for one of the least of these, my little ones, my true brothers and sisters, you demonstrated love to me.

Luke 3 v11 'Give food to the hungry, clothe the poor, and bless the needy'

Luke 12 vv 33-34 Be generous and give all that you have to the poor and provide for yourselves that which will never wear out. Lay-up treasure in heaven, where no thief can come and steal all you have. Where rust nor moth can ruin. For where your treasure (Jesus) is, so will your heart be also.

Luke 14 vv12 – 14 Jesus turned to His host and said, 'When you throw a banquet, don't just invite your friends, relatives or rich neighbours – for it is likely they will return the favour. It is better to invite those who never get an invitation. If you invite the poor to your banquet, along with the outcast, the handicapped, and the blind – those who could never repay you the favour, then you will experience a great blessing in this life, and at the resurrection of the godly you will receive a full reward.'

1 John 3 vv17-18 if anyone sees a fellow believer in need and has means to help him, yet shows no pity and closes his heart against him, how is it even possible that God's love lives in him? Beloved children, our love can't be an abstract theory we only talk about, but a way of life demonstrated through our loving deeds.

Is this what the Spirit is saying?

There are many practical ways to respond to the need in the Community – Donate to a foodbank. Provide (give) a service - plumbing, handyman, cleaning, changing light bulbs to someone who needs such things . Visit people in hospital or prison. Cook a meal for a neighbour or a friend. Baby-sit/child mind, so a couple can have a night/day/afternoon out. Send a letter or a card to someone, to just say hi. Take someone to an appointment.....I could go on, but the picture is clear – Do for others.

Maybe Churches could ask their parishioners to do some of these things – not just leaving it heavily on the shoulders of the Vicar, Priest, Minister, Pastor, Elders, Deacons.....and then maybe WE, the Lord's church would be listening to what the Spirit is saying to US.....

Many a word has been penned from which we could take a moment for our lives. Sometimes they may feel over-used and a little trite, but if we take just one and apply it to our day – maybe we can change the way we see others and how they see themselves.

- If only our eyes saw souls instead of bodies, how different our ideals of beauty would be
- Sometimes MIRACLES are simply GOOD people with KIND hearts
- There are times in life when we just need a HUG. No words. No advice. Just a hug to help us feel better
- Be the light in someone's darkness
- Beauty isn't what you look like – it's who you are
- Friendship isn't a big thing. It's a million LITTLE ones
- *Don't forget to pray today, because God didn't forget to wake you up this morning*

So, what is the Spirit saying to the Churches???

Be a hand that reaches out.

Be a smile for those who have no reason to smile.

Be a light to those who live in darkness.

I could tell you this that or the other - but it is plainly this...do as Jesus would, did, and has mandated us with...love thy neighbour as thyself. At this time of remembering Pentacost, where Jesus gave the disciples a helper, a conscience pricker, a comforter, a Spirit to turn to at any time... Love as Jesus did...with your whole being. No judgement, no questions, no cross examination.

What is the Spirit saying....

I am here. You are there to hold their hand and walk with them, until they are able to walk on alone.

Jesus is forever faithful, so let us be faithful, until forever we meet with our Lord & Saviour - 3 in 1 Father, Son & Holy Spirit...

And ponder this –

Sometimes the person you need to talk to the most is in Heaven

So, listen and you may just hear Him whisper.....

Let us pray