

Living it out (Application):

What would you say to someone who asks you, "How can I seek the kingdom at my workplace when I can't talk about my faith?"

Please pray together for...

Pray for **Rita Carter** in Crystal Court, for strength and a sense of God's great love for her.

For **Andrea O'Neill, Di Queripel, and Val Sayles** and their families.

For the **action-planning meeting** on 19th January – drawing together all the work done in taking St Mark's vision forward.

Mission Partner Prayer Focus:

Pray for **Lifeline Harrogate**, giving thanks that they can apply for charitable status.
Thank you for your prayers for this church community!

A glimpse of heaven

As I awake one misty morn
It's not a pretty sight.
I catch a glimpse of me
and shriek
I give even myself a fright!

The room is dark but I
hear a voice;
A stranger, I cannot see.
"Good morning", he says,
"you're beautiful!"
He surely can't mean me!

I glimpse again, with
different eyes
In the dark, a small ray of
light.
Well...ok..not bad...but
beautiful?
You know, I'm not
convinced he's right.

Though the stranger
clearly knows me not
For I'm really not that
nice.
I'm selfish and I'm
arrogant
And don't ever cross me
twice!

For I can't forgive and I
don't forget
I gossip and I shout.
"Worry not!" the
stranger says, "To me,
You're beautiful inside
and out."

That voice again, this
time I know
My stranger is a man.
But that's not all, you
see there's more
He tells me there's a
plan.

This man is special, I'm
beginning to sense
For he loves me though
I'm bad.
But a plan for me...for
ME! He says
He really must be mad!

There's little I can help
him with
You see I'm just plain
me.
Not superbright nor

And yet he says, "It's possible!"
And strangely, I'm assured
For I draw closer now and am in no
doubt
This man is actually a Lord.

Not Lord of grandeur & riches &
wealth
But of everything of worth.
Of people, animals, mountains &
seas
Lord of all the Earth.

He takes my hand, shall I follow
him?
I'm afraid, I agonize.
"I know your heart, I hold you
dear"
"I've heard your painful cries."

Have you ever known a love like
that
So unconditional, so pure?
"You're beautiful" He says again.
And I'm humbled that's for sure.

The room is now awash with light
That I can clearly see the way
I catch a glimpse of me and smile
"Let it be with me as you say!"
*By Michelle Lepine – December
2012*



GROUP STUDY NOTES

Welcome/Worship:

Week beginning: 13th January 2013

Can you remember the seven "keys" yet? Give sweets to the people who already have it sorted!! Read Isaiah 60: 15-22, rejoicing in the wholeness of God's kingdom on earth. Spend time prayerfully imagining the presence of the Kingdom in your home/workplace.

The Way of Jesus: The one main thing.

Early Christians were called followers of "The Way". But what is that "Way"? What do you believe? **How do you live?** We have articulated this as seven memorable keys which we can use in various ways. I wonder if you can remember what they are? These seven things can be a tool for us in the future—a tool to use in small groups, with friends, one to one, and to explain your faith to others. This week we begin with number one. **What is the one main point?** What's the one main thing in life? I looked around on the Internet for quote about the meaning of life. There are plenty of weighty people who have come up with various definitions. You could probably summarise them with phrases like, "Life is what you make it", or "The purpose of life is to become who you are" (whatever that means), or "There is no meaning - you just do your best," or "The best thing to do is not to look for a meaning in life."

I am grateful Jesus didn't say anything like this, believe anything like this, or live anything like this. In contrast, Jesus told a story about a man who found a pearl in a field and **sold everything to gain it**. He said that there is something worth living for that really is the main point—that is **better, deeper and more eternal than any other truth**. And the thing that the man sold everything for was called **the kingdom of God**. It's obvious, the more you look at it, **that Jesus had one main message**. It was a message that he repeated again and again. He **announced it at the beginning** of his ministry, he told **stories about it** to illustrate it, and he **demonstrated** what it meant with signs and wonders.

His main message was not, "Let's start a church." His main message was not, "I've come to rescue you so you can go to heaven." His main message was not, "I've come to make you into good people." His message was not, "I've come to give you what you want." His message was, "The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news." Everyone at the time understood it. And we are meant to understand it too. If you know the big story, then the kingdom of God makes sense. **The kingdom of God is where God is King**. Where what He wants to happen can happen.

You are a king. You are a king over your body. Your body can do what you tell it to do – hopefully! **It is the effective place of your will.** If you are a boss, then your kingdom is over your employees. If you are a parent then your kingdom is over your children. Hopefully you are a good King or Queen! **God’s kingdom is found wherever His effective will is lived out.** Your **kingdom** come, your **will** be done. Where there is sickness, God’s will is not found. That’s why Jesus always healed. Where there is disease, injustice, hatred, exploitation, spiritual possession, and death, God is not King. This world has always cried out for God to be King. And it still does. Jesus drove out what the Bible calls an imposter-the prince of this world-the evil principalities and powers. And he demonstrated this by healing people and casting out evil. God’s kingdom was on the move. The kingdom was Jesus’ life, and it was all the early church lived for as well. Philip went down to a town in Samaria and when the people believed Philip **as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God** and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women.

And the kingdom is still on the move today - through those who can turn around and be part of it. Through those who will repent and believe. Sometimes we see it in dramatic ways-through miraculous signs, through transformation of character, or big social change. But often we are called to take part in the Kingdom in quite ordinary ways as well. In our daily lives **it’s about making God King over every part.** God made everything, He loves everyone and He wants to be King wherever you operate. Like in John’s company.

John started working in his company three years ago. The company made an ordinary but essential household object. John was given the opportunity to steer the direction of things in the company and to ensure the relationships among staff were what they should be. Several people at his church had suggested that John should look into going into the ministry, but he knew that his full-time Christian work was actually found in the company. After all, it was here that he was able to use the gifts that he had and he had contact with those outside the church whom if he'd been a vicar he might not have met.

For others, work may have been about paying the bills, getting ahead, being successful, justifying their existence. **But John has a bigger cause than that.** John started off by praying for his workplace and his fellow staff. It wasn't long before he noticed that relationships in the office were not what they could be. For a start, some of the more junior staff were being made to work longer hours than they were contracted for and as a result there was pressure put on their personal lives. John prayed about it and was able to gently intervene and suggest that the staff might work much more fruitfully if they were actually given adequate time off. The management agreed. In addition John found himself in a position to pay attention to those in the office who had more menial jobs and at Christmas time he put on a thank you meal for them. It was the first time this had been done and several people came up to him to thank him. Over the coming year finances were tight and the management was tempted to cut corners, shortchanging its customers by subtly making their product less than was advertised. John believed that what they were doing was far bigger than just making a profit, and having prayed about it, was able to influence the company in grasping hold of its vision to be providing a good service – developing a product not just in order to make more money, but to create something

of worth, that was good in itself. John was also able to encourage the company to embrace partnerships with deprived areas of the city that they were based. As a result several of the employees became involved in hands-on work in the local community.

Over the course of three years the life of the company has increasingly reflected the life of the kingdom – **in its unfolding of creation, in its relationships, in its bringing restoration to the community** -and John has lived out his salvation as a child of God. As things changed, people asked him about what motivated him and he was able to share about his relationship with Jesus which has caused him to be a kingdom person. As time went on, he was able to make connections with others, pray for them and even share the life of his church with them as well.

Jesus calls you to seek the Kingdom first, above everything else. There is a church in America called River Tree which says this about itself: At RiverTree we continue to count how many people attend our weekend gatherings. We continue to report how much money is received. We continue to keep track of the number of people who are baptized. But we also know how many... Children we have sponsored through Compassion International; People are being released from addictive behaviour through our Celebrate Recovery ministry; People who have been counseled by our lay counselors; Bags of food are given away every week from our food pantry; Backpacks are filled for underprivileged children returning to school; People are committed enough to growing that they are part of a Huddle; Dollars are being given outside the walls of the church building; People who are visiting those in prison; People who are visiting in assisted living centres; Children who are being adopted.

It seems to me that here is a church that is embracing the reality that it’s all about the kingdom! I would rather you were a kingdom person than a church person. Don’t get me wrong, I believe kingdom people discover that they need church. But church only really makes sense as you join in the cause of the kingdom, because you discover that worshipping God, seeking Him with other Christians, and being equipped is essential if you are going to live this Way. I’m suspicious of solo-pilots! Fewer and fewer people in our culture think that belonging to an institution, club or political party is important. But everyone is up for a cause. Movements have energy. And what greater movement is there than to join in the movement of God in this world? Of course, you won’t want to join, unless you have first allowed Him to be King. The one thing the Kingdom implies is that you have to surrender, submit and repent. You have to let God be boss. It’s either your kingdom, or His. A man found a pearl, and realized there was nothing greater to live for. Have you found the Kingdom? Will you seek it above everything else?

Study

Luke 10: 1-23: What happens when the kingdom comes near? What attitudes to kingdom people bring into the world? How special is the kingdom?

Mark 1: 14-34: What are the accompanying signs of the kingdom? Why? How does Jesus see his “battle”?

Isaiah 9: 6-7; 51: 4-5: How wide is the scope of the kingdom?

What “measurements” of the Kingdom should we use at St Mark’s?