

his parents' permission and so being a mum she tried to comfort him by wiping away his tears. She was telling us that when she got on the minibus her hands were still wet because he had been crying so much and we reflected on the fact that Jesus' hands are wet from the tears that He sheds for the injustices in His world which keep His children in poverty.

I was impacted by many things that I saw and heard whilst we were in Tanzania but the one message that shines through is that Jesus is the hope of the nations. Jesus came to give us life to the full. Jesus wants that for all of us, not just those of us who are fortunate to have been born on the right side of the poverty line. The truth is that we are not just to live out a covenant relationship with Jesus but that we are to be His Kingdom people who share everything so that there is no one in need. We are His body, God's chosen instrument to bring hope to a hurting world and to deliver justice to the poor and the oppressed.

STUDY QUESTIONS

2 Cor 5: 17-21. In what ways are you called to be an ambassador for Jesus? How do you feel about this?

Acts 2: 42-47. Think of one way in which your life could look more like this covenant community.

What do you think of the HG1000 project?

Phil 3: 5-14: What things are blocking you from your knowing your covenant identity?

APPLICATION

If you don't already do it, commit to praying the Lord's prayer each day and when you get to "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" visualise emptying yourself of your own desires and filling yourself with God's desires for your life.

PLEASE PRAY FOR...

- The people of the Philippines, and the effectiveness of aid being sent there.
- The HG1000 project, that it would grab the imagination of the whole area.
- Peter Gibson and Terry Wilcox visiting Bellary in India – for wisdom and discernment.
- Charlotte Stacey, for protection and health
- The Catley family in their grief.
- Mission Prayer focus: please pray for Wellspring as they search for a new director.

This week's study notes were written by Michelle Hayes



LAUNCH OF HG1000 JESUS, PAUL AND THE CHURCH

TODAY WE ARE LAUNCHING AN AMBITIOUS AND EXCITING AREA WIDE PROJECT WITH COMPASSION CALLED HG1000.

Currently there are more than 1.3 million children in Compassion projects in 26 developing countries but there are many millions more who need to be given the chance to escape poverty and to come to know Jesus. We are delighted to welcome **Eliezer Haguma**, a former sponsored child from Rwanda, to help us launch it.



We are a town on a mission. Nothing builds community better than being on a mission together. God has given us a huge vision which will impact our own community as well as many communities which are living in poverty across the world. It is called HG1000 because we want to see the Harrogate area sponsor 1000 Compassion children and provide 1000 families who are living in abject poverty with clean water via the Water for Life filter system. For more information please watch: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3y5ehB8p5N8&feature=youtu.be>

WORSHIP: Reflect on the words "You are my son/daughter, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Ask God to show you how He sees you. Ask God to reaffirm your identity as His child so that you are free from needing human affirmation.

READING: Luke 3: 21-23. **Our covenant identity and calling, a community on a**

mission: When I was at the Harrogate foodbank a few weeks ago, a few of us were talking to a young single mum and naturally we seized on the opportunity to invite her to church. Sadly she said that she couldn't come to church because she thought that people would judge her for being a single mum who wears short skirts, and who drinks and smokes. Naturally I tried to reassure her that I have been welcomed despite a far from perfect track record but she still declined to come to church. Her response made me question why her experience of Jesus' church had not represented the love and humility of Jesus?

When I read this passage I question why did Jesus, the purest man to walk the earth, need to be baptised? He had every reason to be self-righteous and yet instead he insisted that John the Baptist should baptise Him with the sinners who were dying to their old sinful life and being reborn into a covenant relationship with God. He led by example. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 Paul says "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." During his baptism we see the great exchange where God swaps the holiness of his Son for the sinfulness of our fallen race. Jesus was baptized like a sinner to serve as our Saviour.

We heard in Luke that Jesus was affirmed in His identity as God's beloved son and He never waived in that identity when Satan tried to tempt Him nor when people asked Him to prove He was the Son of God so that He could save himself from death. By submitting to baptism He was showing that He knew He was the Son of God and that He knew that out of that relationship comes the responsibility to do God's will. Jesus knew that God wanted to be in relationship with us and Jesus offered to represent us in the Covenant exchange, He would die so that we could live.

Jesus invited his followers to experience the same depth of relationship that He enjoyed with His Father. He showed us that everything was centred on spending time with His Father and knowing His Word and acting out His will to bring His Kingdom to this earth. When two become one, both parties share all that they have. God wants to live in perfect union with us so that when people look at us, they see Him. All that God made available to Jesus is available to us and in return we should give all we have to God. God doesn't need us but He wants us. He doesn't need us to fulfil His plans but He wants to involve us in the fulfilment of His plans. What a privilege it is to serve the King of Kings and to know that He relies on us as much as we rely on Him. We are God's children placed here to do all that Jesus did when He walked the earth, not because we have to, but because we know we are God's children and we want to reflect the goodness of our loving Father.

We are blessed so that we can be a blessing. We are equipped to bring light into the darkness. When we meet young mums or drug addicts who think they won't be welcomed into Jesus' church, we are here to show them Jesus' unconditional love. When I visited the Compassion projects in Tanzania a couple of weeks ago I saw the difference that showing unconditional love makes to a family living in poverty. We sponsor because we want to show God's love and we don't expect anything in return and yet the reality is that we end up being blessed by the relationship that we form with our sponsored children. God turns the blessings we give, back on us.

READING: Acts 9: 1-6. **The church is Jesus' body** Here we meet Saul, a very religious Pharisee who "obeyed the law without fault" and thought that he was serving God by harshly persecuting the followers of the Way i.e. the Christians. But Jesus stepped in and pointed out that he was on the wrong path. Jesus radically transformed him from Saul the terrorist to Paul the evangelist. In those days if a Jewish man married a gentile, the family would hold a funeral for him as they considered him dead. And yet God chose Paul to be his chosen vessel to preach the Good News and to show the love of Jesus to the Gentiles, the people he would normally not want to be in the same room with. And Paul despite the hardship he suffered in the years after his conversion was completely obedient because after his baptism he was transformed by the sacrificial love of Jesus.

In this passage we also see more signs of the covenant relationship. Jesus says to Saul: "I am Jesus who you are persecuting". Jesus was telling Saul that when one of His disciples hurts, He hurts too because He is in covenant with us. This is why in later years Paul went on to describe the church as the Body of Christ. We are His church; we are all Jesus' representatives on earth.

Therefore to ensure we truly reflect our Lord we should "seek first God's Kingdom and righteousness" in all of our decisions at home, at work, when are out with friends, everywhere. But God knows and my family and friends know that I am a work in progress. I still get it wrong and thankfully the Bible shows us many examples of those who have gone before me that have also got it wrong but God can still help us to put it right- look at Saul for example! And we can assured of God's love and grace even when we do get it wrong.

We have been placed here so that people can experience Jesus through us if we will allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, which is why we must feed the hungry, be a voice for the voiceless, forgive and love without boundaries. When Guy and I were in Tanzania visiting the Compassion projects, one of the team was telling us about a little boy from the village who was in floods of tears because he wanted to go on the minibus with the Compassion project children but they could not take him without