

What does Jesus say about changing the world? MHCC 31 March – for youth-led service

Jesus changed the world. And he asked us to follow him. But what changed the world was more a new way of seeing and being than a global improvement plan. Jesus said and lived: Love One Another. *If there's a global improvement plan, that's it.*

If you could have one wish, to make the world a better place, what would you wish for? How would you change the world? Hold that wish as you listen to my summary of what I think Jesus said in the four gospels (in words, pictures and actions - living as a servant amongst outcasts, dying, transforming death into new life) that might be relevant for us as we seek to change the world

- You are to be salt and light – agents of change, making things taste better, last longer, and be seen more clearly.
- Blessed are the ones the culture sees as losers (the poor, the weak, the oppressed); you are to put them first, always, to welcome them as ‘us’, not ‘them’, and to serve with compassion those with the greatest needs. Aim to make a difference for those at the margins, not for your friends.
- Money is problematic. It is as likely to weigh you down as help you. Life goals serve you (and God) better if they are about striving to follow Jesus (*who was a homeless itinerant preacher with no possessions*). Where you set your compass is where your life will end up, whether that is the love of God or the security of material wealth – but they are not often in the same direction.
- Repent, and call others to repent. Each of us is to pay attention to the ways we are contributing, actively or passively, to the things that are wrong in the world – and to make changes in ourselves first, before preaching about them to others. God rejoices to welcome us back onto the path *every time*.
- Do not judge others – love them, even (especially) your enemies. And forgive. Forgive over and over and over. Forgive because you know you also contribute to the world's ills, and you have been welcomed into the arms of God anyway, and God is enabling you to contribute to making the world better.
- Rules are meant to help people. When they stop helping people they can be broken – *in the service of love*.
- Transformative ‘new’ can't be tacked onto old systems – both will fall apart. Jesus' way of love tips everything on its head and some things can't be put back into the box. That's OK. Let them go.
- It won't be easy. People will hate you. Even your friends and family will come into conflict with you.
- When conflict comes, try to resolve it by involving the fewest number of people you can, quietly and in love.
- Don't be afraid. God has already got this. The Way of Love is underway, and you are part of it already.
- Transformation happens quietly, secretly, in hiding; it comes from tiny beginnings – *like yeast in bread, the seeds of weeds*. The things that are last now, that seem to never get anywhere, will be first; the people who get left behind now will one day be leading the way.
- Resist the temptation to make God prove godself.

- Share. Give. There will be enough for everyone.
- Ground yourself in Jesus. Be so soaked in the love and teachings of Jesus that you are dripping. Eat and drink Jesus. Tune yourself to Jesus' voice. Allow the light of Jesus to shine in you, and out of you, to light up everything you do and all the choices you make about living in this *global, terrifying, beautiful complex world*.
- Pay attention. Watch for signs of hope, signs of the in-breaking of love, the presence of God.
- Stay in the light. You can't lead anyone or change anything if you are fumbling around blindly in the darkness – *even if you have all the leadership confidence in the world, qualifications, experience...* you are still blind without the light of love.
- Let others encounter the Light of Jesus in you (and don't be afraid to talk about Jesus being the source). Teach them the way of love – mostly by living it out.
- Mercy compassion and humble service are the way forward. This is true greatness.
- Power and control are not the ways of Jesus. Suffering, brokenness, loss, death... in these unlikely places is where transformation comes.
- Don't just listen to ideas; don't just talk about it – do something. Don't just hear Jesus say 'Love One Another' – get on with loving on another. If you have been shown the way, you are expected to take it
- *'Even Jesus didn't heal all the lepers in Palestine'*: you don't need to do everything, help everyone, save the world. 'You' is a plural word. Changing the world is something we do together.
- Even a tiny bit of faith/ hope/ belief can change the world - causing movement where problems loom like mountains
- Even if it's the very last hour, or you feel there's not much you can do at this point, join the work.
- While you wait for things to improve (*or for the end of the world, or both*) – faithfully look after the people you are with – especially those who struggle to look after themselves. Be a neighbour, even to enemies or strangers.
- Humbly trust God. Pray. Ask for help. Seek truth. Stop clinging to safety and security. Don't worry about the future but keep your eyes on Jesus and trust that Jesus' way leads us all into a better future.
- God is with you. Always. Forever. And the God who is with you *is* the Love that everything else stems from. Loving one another will change the world – and you are able to do it because you are accompanied, forever, by Love itself, the presence of God.