

## Holy Dissatisfaction

What makes you feel satisfied? Maybe you've accomplished something that was a big deal or a significant achievement in your life.....

What makes you feel comfortable? Maybe you have managed to finally pay off your mortgage and are confident your pensions are going to see you ok well into your old age.

What makes you feel content? Maybe you've got yourself the job you always wanted or have been promoted in your workplace. Maybe you realise after a number of years that the person you married is still the person that makes you the most happy.. And that generally life, as an American colloquialism has it, is just peachy.

Whatever our age, through many parts of our life timeline, there will be some level or another of most of us having done something to some degree of satisfaction.

One of the dictionary definitions of satisfaction is that of contentment or fulfilment. But how much aware are we that the Bible and specifically many of the words of Jesus himself call us to actually be DISSATISFIED... for those of us of certain ages those following Jesus' example might empathise with the Rolling Stones, as they once proclaimed "I can't get no satisfaction!"

There is such a thought process sometimes known as Holy dissatisfaction or as American author and church leader Bill Hybels calls it 'Holy Discontent'

This occurs when someone experiences an uneasiness in their spirit about any aspect of the brokenness of this world that spurs them to take some form of positive action in order to contribute towards changing that particular situation.

As I am sure you might expect, there are a number of Old Testament change-makers we could look at as examples of Holy discontents:

Take Moses –dissatisfied at seeing the misery and suffering of God's people.

Or the young David – who was not going to stand by and let a very big Philistine mock The Almighty and his chosen people.

Or maybe Nehemiah who could not be content with the walls of City of God remaining in ruins. And then, of course, there's Jesus.....but more of His words later..

You see, those who have chosen to follow Christ have to accept that it's a given that they can't get no satisfaction in the world in which they live if they are to be GENUINE followers of the one true God.

WHY? Because there is a whole broken world out there full of broken people and broken systems and situations, and, as disciples of the Saviour of mankind, we are obliged to remain discontented and dissatisfied until we have played our part in restoration, reconciliation, mediation and salvation in this world – enacting heaven here on earth.

So, how do you feel about being the Divine solution to the problem of evil, injustice and unrighteousness in the world today? For me, I personally find it a huge and daily challenge. But folks, this is the reality of our lives in calling ourselves Christ Ones.

We cannot be satisfied with comfortability, and YET in the world-view that is exactly what satisfaction tends to attain to - being satisfied that there is money in the bank, that savings and pensions assure financial futures are relatively secure, that issues of poverty, drug or alcohol misuse, people trafficking and crime are mostly someone else's problems – whilst injustice and inequality are just the tough facts of some people's lives...and the list could go on and on....

But the status quo is not an option for the children of the Promise, who are called to be agents of change.....as Bishop Graham Gray expounds in his book Disciples and Citizens “they - followers of Christ - have discovered the grace of God and His capacity to change them for the better”...to share in the Holy Spirit is to taste ‘the powers of the age to come’ and once we have tasted that, we **CANNOT** remain satisfied with the way this world is presently panning out.” What we know we should **NOT** be doing is **withdrawing, sitting it out** or just **waiting in our holy comfort zones** till we shuffle off this mortal coil or until Jesus returns.....

What can we do? Well we can pray and there is a lot said in the Bible about the power and potency of prayer. Prayer leads to discernment. Prayer aligns our will with God's will.

**but** so often we find that God answers our prayers in ways we don't expect...

Nigel is a very faithful man of God from my previous church and he once shared with the church about a desperate situation that was happening somewhere in the world which he was regularly praying about. During one of these prayer times, he audibly sensed God say to him “yes, I hear your prayers, now what are YOU going to do about it, Nigel” Don't forget, boys and girls, we are His hands, feet and voices here on earth – that means the vision of God's future kingdom is our call to action

One theologian, Jurgen Moltmann heads towards the example of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. Acts 26:14.. Jesus asks “*Saul. Saul, why do you persecute me?*”

*“it is hard for you to kick against the goads”* says Jesus.....now a goad was a sharp pointed stick used by an oxen driver to stop the animal from wandering off the path.

Moltmann explains "Faith, wherever it develops into hope, causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience...those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is .....Peace with God means conflict with the world and it has to be that way... if it isn't then we are not enacting the will of God... sounds a bit of a harsh challenge for us but it is a fundamental reality.....the vision of the future kingdom IS A CALL TO ACTION!

As a result of the pandemic almost inevitably around the world economic devastation and destitution will be a part of reality. Some analysts have coined the acronym VUCA ..in the world of politics and financial forecasting, it represents the characteristics of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity....living in this state brings about anxiety and diminishes hope. However, for the Christian, every crisis presents an opportunity, that we should be seizing as we recognise that God IS in control.

For Patrick Sookhdeo, director of the Barnabas Aid, a more Christian version of V.U.C.A. he suggests could be Vision, Understanding, Courage and Action. Being able to see the issues, learning much about the issues, standing boldly up to those who create the issues and move to take action to address the issues. Folks, we have the capability of being be a VUCA church

Whilst preparing for this I was reminded of some people for whom, that interpretation of VUCA was just part of their life journey... Mother Teresa saw the problems in the slums of India and obediently chose to serve, doing what was needed... or Martin Luther King Jnr. who saw injustice and inequality as unacceptable and made the sacrificial choice to act upon it despite the violent, and political responses to his actions...even for a non-believer such as Sir Bob Geldolf, a man whose previous career was driven by self determination to achieve, to be the best – he even had a hit song that called 'Looking after number One' **and yet** something caused him to be deeply dissatisfied with the fact that hundreds of thousands of people in Ethiopia were dying from malnutrition when, in his view there was surplus food that countries were literally throwing away...

You see - all it takes is one person's action.....same for each one us, all it takes is for each of us to act on our dissatisfaction.

### **So what exactly is this dissatisfaction? what does it feel like?**

Have you ever had that stirring or frustration, even anger at an injustice or something that is just totally wrong in your eyes so much so it's almost makes you emotionally stunted? Well more than likely that is the Holy Spirit at work in us.. He is the agent of the unrest in our hearts and souls, he's the goad!. We can brush it off as an emotional reaction if we want to but the fact is the seed of dissatisfaction is planted and will begin to take root... we can try and busy ourselves with life but we just can't rest easy by ignoring it...

Let's return to the words of Jesus...

Matthew 19:16-22 tells the story of the rich young man or as some versions have it 'the rich young ruler'... the last few lines of that story came as quite a shock to the Jewish culture of the time and a challenge which 2000 years later holds up as much as it did then ..... 'Jesus said to him, *"If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money<sup>[b]</sup> to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."* When the young man heard this word, *he went away grieving, for he had many possessions"*

The saddest thing about this story is that this man was so satisfied with his achievements, with the status he held and what that meant for him in that culture... there was nothing for him to be dissatisfied about – even though he had obeyed all the Jewish laws since he was a boy, he was unable to choose to lose his security even though Jesus was offering him much more.

It is, however, vital that in our righteous indignation at things we see as injustices in the world around us we react in a scriptural way preferably with the Fruits of the Spirit found in Gal 5:22-23 foremost in our minds and not a judgemental heart... there is a fine line between believing what is not right and reacting to it as God would desire us to... we just have to read how Jesus responded to the Samaritan woman at the well, little Zaccheaus or the woman caught in adultery, the was truth revealed but no judgement was made or retribution carried out.

I have mentioned earlier some globally known names of people God has stirred up and goaded..but there are many who may not be so well known outside of Christian circles, some of them are everyday folk like you and I...here's just a few of them (show Slide)

1. In 2008, Christina Caine who was part of Hillsongs Church in Australia was stirred to action by what she saw and heard of human trafficking with refugees. She and her husband started the A21 Campaign which is now a global anti-Human Trafficking organisation.
2. Following a vision he believed was of God, Pete Greig, set up the 24-7 Prayer Movement back in 1999 that now has roots around the world in more than 10,000 Prayer rooms. Many other national and international prayer initiatives have launched out of this one movement.
3. John Kirky – believed God was calling him to give up his career in finance and use his knowledge of the industry to help those in financial hardship. In 1996 in his spare room in Bradford he started CAP, Christians Against Poverty - now a nationally recognised service provider.
4. And in a local context, after suffering from domestic abuse herself, Kathy Coe set up Pathway Project in 1993 to help other victims and survivors. In 2019 she was awarded the MBE in recognition of her work in this area of need.

All of these people had been stirred into being dissatisfied with how things were.

Their obedience to the Holy Spirit's goading has created an unexpected mushrooming effect that is God's handiwork...Our reading this morning was given in it's fuller context but the focus for us was on verses 8-10 "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life*"....

...each of us in this room and watching on-line this morning have the capacity and capability of acting on their dissatisfaction...

what is God currently stirring in you? How will you respond?

If you feel that whilst you have been listening to this that something has resonated or stirred up emotions and thoughts, it may well be that the Spirit of God is at work. Talk it through with a trusted friend or your homegroup or a church Elder.

Like my friend Nigel, God may be asking what are YOU going to do about it?

Shall we PRAY...?

*Father God, Lord of our very being, create in each of us a new heart for the Kingdom mission, fire up the gifts and abilities you have given us, give us the wisdom and discernment to hear and understand and the courage to act as your eyes, hands and feet in this damaged and hurting world so that we be builders of your Kingdom here on earth. We aks this in the name of Jesus Christ , Our Lord and Saviour...and all God's people said? AMEN*