

Picking up an offence

Intro: linking with Anthony's last point: to hear the call & be able to act on it, we need to be in the right place personally.

Lucy's word last Sunday evening: the end to throw off all that hinders me from running the race set before me.

1) Picking up an offence against God

Main Scriptures:

John 1:32-34 John was very sure who Jesus was.

But in Luke 7:18-19 he is doubting if Jesus really is the Messiah. ?Why

Note Jesus' response, esp vs 32.

John the Baptist has picked up an offence against Jesus.

Note: it was after hearing what Jesus was doing – healing the sick the raising the dead. Seems he wasn't very impressed! Was getting disillusioned. Was it a case of:

- a) Personal offence because he felt abandoned, forgotten about, uncared for? Unanswered prayers? You love everyone else except me....?

John 11. The story of Mary & Martha after Lazarus' death is also very poignant. Martha runs to meet Jesus when she hears he is approaching. She challenges Jesus very directly about not coming to help them when Lazarus was dying. Jesus is not the least perturbed by this, but dialogues with her, ending by drawing out faith from her. Mary's reaction is very different. She stays away, and doesn't come out until someone fetches her, saying that Jesus is calling for her. She falls at His feet in tears and says exactly the same words as Martha, but this time, Jesus is deeply troubled and weeps. Was He detecting broken trust in Mary? Could she have been communicating that she had really believed He cared, but now this.....!

Is there any disappointment in our lives which has caused us to 'stay away' in our hearts even if outwardly we still seem to be worshiping?

- b) Is this what Messiah is supposed to do? He's supposed to be our great liberator, addressing the national problem of unjust occupation, helping us overcome our enemies, ousting this bad king and ushering in the real King and His Kingdom? Instead, he's going round healing the sick and spending time teaching women of bad reputation and eating with tax collectors and sinners. This surely is not what Messiah was being sent to do?
- c) Are we also saying "I want a God who is STRONG not WEAK & IMPOTENT!"

Was John confused and offended that the future King (if it was really him) was behaving like a servant? He seemed to have forgotten, or not understood the prophetic Servant Scriptures in Isaiah.

- The Suffering Servant Isaiah 53

Peter didn't get this at all. Straight after acknowledging that Jesus was the Christ, the Anointed King, he was rebuked for refusing the idea that the Kingdom would come through **REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING LOVE**. This idea was obviously offensive to him!

- **Isaiah 42** was written was written about the Christ – that He wouldn't raise His voice in the streets, wouldn't be organizing a political opposition group and rallying crowds against the Govt, wouldn't even be announcing big miracle rallies! Also He wouldn't break bruised reeds. Any successful leader would get rid of weak people in his team, esp those with a dubious history who would damage his reputation.

Servanthood & vulnerability. (Lee Abbey Christmas 2013)

Jesus shows us the Father – but not only as an adult. What does a helpless, vulnerable newborn baby reveal to us about the Father? Shocking vulnerability! Was willing to make Himself totally vulnerable to and dependent on imperfect human parents! His supreme vulnerability is seen in the crucifixion. God overcame His enemies by making Himself totally vulnerable to them!

Song: El Shaddai:

'Your most awesome work was done

Through the *frailty* of Your Son'. ??

Some found that word controversial - even heretical? Refused to sing it. But then they are missing the whole point. His strength was also made perfect in weakness! (The foolishness of the Cross)

This is particularly significant when we consider that fear of vulnerability could well be man's greatest problem. Root of all wars? How does God respond to man's greatest problem? Becomes the most vulnerable of all! Shocking!

The Kingdom message is totally at variance with the world's way of dealing with things! 'My are ways are not your ways...'

Consider some of Jesus' **parables**

- the farmer sowing seed then patiently waiting for the harvest
- the farmer not picking out the weeds from the among the wheat for fear of damaging the wheat (and anyway, some of the weeds may turn into wheat! Remember Saul of Tarsus!!)
- the small and insignificant becoming big and significant in the end (mustard seed, leaven in the dough)

The '**upside down Kingdom**' - huge subject – can only touch on it today.

Main focus today is whether I'm offended by God's way of doing things. Am I really impressed with God and Hos way of working?? If not, I'm not a worshipper. *Test: is there anything about God's way of doing things that I would like to change?*

Application:

Am I personally offended because of the way God worked/ is working I me, my family...

Are we offended today by God's way of working in the world?

'Why doesn't God do something?

Why doesn't He intervene? Why doesn't He strike Boko Haram's leaders dead?

Why doesn't He remove ISIS from the face of the earth?

Why is He rather working quietly in one heart after another? (see theme of many of Jesus' parables)

Conclusion

Offence is the seed out of which unbelief grows.

Taking offence at God for whatever reason is serious because it leads to unbelief, which then causes us to die in the desert instead of entering the promised land! We cut ourselves off from the Only One who can heal and restore us.

Ministry time:

Ps 139: 23-24

'Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me, O God and know my thoughts!
And see if there is any *offensive* way in me...'

Ask the Holy Spirit to show us anywhere in our lives where we may have picked up an offence against God, which is stopping us from being able to really trust Him.

If ready to repent of this, give the opportunity – in silent prayer or by coming forward for prayer.

But **behind the offence is often a wound**. This needs to be healed. Need to bring Him the pain of feeling abandoned, forgotten, etc and ask for a revelation of His heart. May need to covenant with God to take time to go through this in depth, maybe with a trusted helper.