

Standing at the Crossroads (2) – 27.5.20

When I recorded a message a few weeks ago... I spoke about standing at the Crossroads and listening out for God. At that time, three words came to mind: Wake up – Turn Around – Come Home.

This is the sequel.

All the evidence continues that people are waking up to the whispers of God. Just to open my Newsfeed at the weekend, the first article was about how footballers are finding God and household names like Jurgen Klopp are speaking openly about their Christian faith. The Second article was Prince William speaking about the relevance of the Christian faith today in mental health. Since the lockdown 1 in 4 have accessed a church service online; one Sunday Zoom reported an outage because of too many people accessing church services: “the church broke the internet” one pundit joked.

People are googling prayer. Perhaps you’ve seen Russell Brand’s YouTube video about why people are doing this. It’s worth a watch!

Across the world at this time, through the #ThyKingdomCome initiative, people are praying for five friends to come to know Jesus – to come home.

Come Home: I think this is the longing in the heart of God for his lost sons and daughters. I am praying that He will do the miracle and call them home. But it’s up to the church to welcome them into the family.

This is creating a certain amount of nervousness. Gosh! How will they fit in? It’s like having someone round for dinner for the first time, you can spend time nervously re-arranging the furniture. Families who adopt children speak of this vital settling-in period.

Here are three things I think we can do to get ready:

- Plenty of drink
- Food on the table
- Light the fire

Plenty of drink:

- Jesus said (John 4.14): “whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life”
- In Egypt the Coptic Christians tell the story of when the Ottoman emperor closed all the churches. Christians continued to meet in their homes to pray. After a year the emperor in frustration re-opened the churches. “I closed one church and opened 100 more in its place”. When the Christians came together again, they found that the living waters “came out of the bellies of all the people”, rather than from the pulpit alone.
- This is the work of the Holy Spirit

Food on the table:

- On the day of Pentecost, the crowd were amazed because “they heard the wonders of God in their own languages”.
- In the 7th century, there was an incredible flowering of mission across the North. Some of you will know that one of my heroines is Hilda who ran a mixed monastery in Whitby. In the monastery there was a cattle-herder called Caedmon. He was tongue-tied and found it very

difficult to get his words out. But one night he falls asleep and hears this heavenly song. In the morning he can still hear it, in fact he can sing it. He tells his boss and his boss tells Hilda who invites Caedmon to sing his song at the feast. This is the first example of the gospel in the local Anglo-Saxon language. As lost sons and daughters come home, we need Caedmons to be released to feed them with the feast from heaven, the heavenly banquet – in a language they can understand.

- This is the work of Holy Spirit

Light the Fire:

- John the Baptist said: “I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I ... He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt 3).
- This week in 1738, John Wesley’s “heart was strangely warmed” at a Moravian prayer meeting in London. This was the moment that launched a movement of profound transformation in society, especially through his preference for the poor. Once asked why his outdoor preaching attracted so many crowds he replied: “I set myself on fire, and people come to watch me burn”. One beautiful thing happening amongst our churches in Lancashire, is our deepening prayer for a visitation of the Holy Spirit, for our hearts to be set on fire, beacons across the county. I have been moved to tears by our Festival of Prayer & worship for ThyKingdomCome
- This is the work of Holy Spirit

How wonderful that we’re about to come to Pentecost Sunday....

- How interesting that across history the work of the Holy Spirit has been sidelined, boxed in again and again. Even in the English language – we can say that’s for the Pentecostals.
- Ooh no....
- Father Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the Pope said this: “We need a new Pentecost, today and every day.”
- My prayer this Pentecost, God sends His Spirit afresh into all our hearts across Lancashire, across our nation
- - His rivers of living water welling up in our hearts and flowing out to reshape the landscape of our nation
- His gift of languages, so people can come home to the heavenly banquet and hear about the wonders of God in a language they can understand
- His fire from heaven, to launch movements of profound societal change.

Come Holy Spirit. Visit us in Lancashire. Visit our nation. Amen.

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