

Sermon Transcript 24/7/22

Frontline Sundays 3 Whatever we do

Colossians 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. 18 Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. 20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. 22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

TITLE

We have been doing a series called Frontline Sundays where we, as the Church, are more than just a body of people who meet together on a Sunday or in smaller groups at other times ..., GATHERED AND SCATTERED, ... but throughout the week God calls us to still be His church as individuals scattered throughout our local community; in jobs, in families, in neighbourhoods, in social activities. Irrespective of whether we are gathered or scattered, we are still part of the body of Christ, and we are called to worship, to follow Jesus, to serve Him and to be His witnesses wherever we are.

We called these situations frontlines, not because we are at war with those around us, but like part of a frontline service: we are here to bring them the presence of Jesus by our actions and words because knowing Jesus is life-changing. Our frontline “emergency service” is the vital task of bringing reconciliation between human beings and God. Here’s the definition we had again.

DEFINITION

Frontlines are the everyday places where we live, work, study, or play and where we’re likely to connect with people who aren’t Christians.

WHATEVER WE DO

We connect with people. Connecting with people means working together with someone, serving someone as a customer, socialising with others, being a family member, being part of a team. It’s all about social interaction. When people know we are a Christian, how we act is as important as what we say. Are we living and acting in a way that will make a difference to someone else’s life?

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul talks about being ambassadors of Christ, bringing a message of reconciliation. Here’s a few VERSES.

20 We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

That’s why we find we have frontlines – because we are here to be ambassadors of God bringing a message, an appeal that men and women are reconciled with God. An ambassador represents the government of their country in a foreign land. The British ambassador to whoever brings a

piece of Britain wherever he or she is sent – promoting all things British and explaining what Britain is all about to the country and government they are ambassadors to. Being an ambassador means being God’s representative to your workplace community, neighbourhood, family or whatever.

AND THEY CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS MONTAGE

What of God do people pick up from you and me in our frontlines? Is that a positive question, or an “ouch” one? How many times have you come across a situation where you hear the comment about some Christian behaving badly, “and he calls himself a Christian.” Now I’ve got to say, that we all blot our copybooks sometimes – it’s just what human beings are like even Christians. But what is our behaviour really telling others about Jesus?

Worse than that, those of us who have been brought up in church can have different patterns of behaviour at church from when we are in secular environments. Church can be a little world, a culture in itself. We can have different attitudes inside and outside of church. We worship on a Sunday, we rejoice that we are the people of God, we hear all about how powerful God is and how important prayer is, we affirm Christian values, how we have been rescued from sin and its consequences, affirm that we will follow Jesus as He leads us through life. But when Monday morning comes along, we may be different people and we may come across as scarcely different from anyone else. It’s been a while since I was in a secular working environment, but I do know that identifying and speaking as a Christian can be difficult. It largely depends on the place and the people. But we are called to be ambassadors, bringers of God’s reconciliation. How do we build relationships on our frontlines that will bless others and ourselves?

GALATIANS 2A

There are no hard and fast rules about how we should behave on the frontline as it were, but in our reading in Galatians 2 Paul gave us some helpful pointers. He first talks in the first few verses of how we act towards one another as part of the Church. None of it is surprising and we and I’m sure we can read these words and nod in approval. There is nothing unfamiliar to us here as God’s people. *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.* We are called to be at peace with one another as we are at peace with Christ. We should give thanks to God for all He Has made us. Our God is amazing, isn’t He?

GALATIANS 2B

Then Paul says: *16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.* As we worship, we seek to ground the message of Christ in us. It is wonderful to praise God for all He has done for us – to celebrate who He is. And of course, whether in word or deed, we do it in the name of Christ. Of course we do and the life of the church is geared towards living and acting in the name of Christ in all that we do.

GALATIANS 2C

If we have a duality to how we behave in Church and who we are when we are scattered, then as we go down the passage we find the same kind of sentiments we read of in verses 15-17 down in verses 22-24 – when we are outside the church and in our frontlines.

22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

We have gone from the sacred to the secular. Now let's do a little interpretation here as we don't have legal slavery in our society so how do we understand this text? In Roman society, slavery was the norm for the majority the lower strata of society. Rather than being contracted to work as we do now, individuals bonded themselves to masters or families where in exchange for being provided for, they worked. Slavery could be entered into voluntarily, or could be forced or obliged in some way. Usually, slaves became the property of their master and could only leave slavery if they bought their way out, or were freed for any other reason.

TITLE

It is inconceivable that one person should own another in our modern day, but almost all of us have worked, and in doing so we entered into a legal contract, whereby we exchanged our time and our skills in the service of an employer for set times and for a set amount of money. Or we can think of situations where we have taken appointments to serve others on a voluntary basis and committed ourselves to that. So even though the the passage speaks about slavery, it does give us some pointers to consider as we consider what our attitude should be for how we serve others we have become linked with and carry out work, whether paid or voluntary. In the blurb for this LICC even includes the relationship between a grandmother and granddaughter because these relationships are all based on promises and familial obligations that we put ourselves in.

So, even though we interact with, and serve others as free men and women, we find the same principles apply to modern day employment and volunteer service for the purposes of understanding what Paul is saying here. And what's that? VERSE *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord* It doesn't matter on who is boss, master, leader, or fellow worker, the work we have committed ourselves to do should be done not just for others, but for the Lord. When we honour Him in what we do, we also honour those we serve.

In some kinds of job, honouring God in how we work can have a big effect in situations of poor pay, poor conditions, or poor relationships between members of staff. In my teaching career I found the things students most valued from me as they were trying to recover from exam failure elsewhere were things like compassion, a listening ear, encouragement to not give up – things shaped by my Christian faith – rather than some of my "old school" contemporaries who pressurised and harassed them to perform. Whatever you do, make sure it is as the Lord – as if they were members of the body of Christ.

Thinking about it, the same applies to any we do in our frontlines. Whether it is a social activity, a sporting activity, volunteering or whatever, we deal with others with respect, as unto the Lord, as if they were members of the body of Christ, because that's what they may end up as!

I've got to say that doing things as to the Lord can be a hard to do in some workplaces or social situations. Sometimes it may not be showing the compassionate side of our faith, but speaking for justice into workplaces, or exposing abusive situations. HAROLD WILSON Christians in this land have long history in promoting social justice, often at great personal cost. Harold Wilson once said that the Labour movement in the UK owed more to Methodism than it did to Marx.

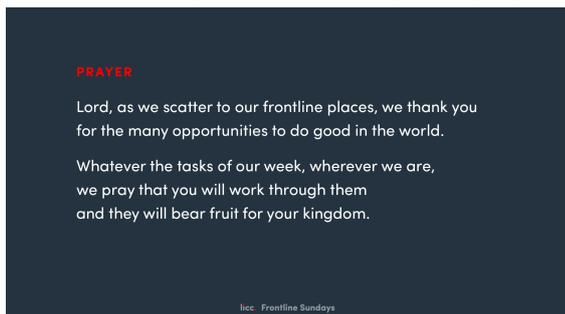
ATTITUDE QUOTE

I suspect that none of us are ever going to end up as great social reformers, but our attitude to the ordinary joys and challenges of our everyday tasks on our frontlines will become known and appreciated by those we connect with who don't know Christ and will help draw them closer to Christ.

I'll finish this morning with the LICC video for today which nicely draws the threads together.

VIDEO

How do we respond? Let's say this prayer together as we close.



To remind us of that prayer, we are taking away a pencil this morning. We can use it for notes and tasks as a reminder of whatever do, we can do for God. If we leave it in a conspicuous place, it may be a reminder to give thankful prayer that God is interested in what we do in the places where we are. It is also there to remind us that whatever we do, we do it as to the Lord.



For Reflection & Discussion

Sermon Synopsis

The sermon focuses on the idea that 'whatever you do, do it ALL in the name of Jesus. Do it with ALL your heart.' Many Christians live unconsciously with a sacred/secular divided way of thinking about their daily lives. Some things are accepted as being important to God, and the rest is 'just life'. Paul will have none of that thinking – he uses the phrase 'whatever you do' in a worship context (15–17) and in an everyday work context (22–24). The idea of doing something in someone else's name is that you are acting as that person's representative. If that person is Jesus, that changes everything! It's this attitude to the ordinary joys and challenges of our everyday tasks and activities that can mark us out as Christians.

Questions

1. What difference do you think it makes to do things 'in the name of Jesus' in our everyday lives? Reflect on the things you've done today. How do you imagine yourself doing these things 'for the Lord'?
2. In verse 17, this seems to be in the context of our gathered worship. How can our worship be offered in the 'name of Jesus'?
3. In verse 23, Paul encourages the slaves to work 'with all your heart, as working for the Lord.' What does that mean for us today?
4. Paul says that people will be rewarded by the Lord as they work 'for the Lord'. What do you imagine this reward might involve?
5. We learn the ways of Jesus as we are involved in our daily tasks. What are you learning about the ways of Jesus at the moment?

(For Small Group Leaders) There are more activities listed in the Small Group Booklet.