

Pr Mark Turner: The Man with a Donkey (27/4/19)

This week we celebrated ANZAC Day. This national holiday commemorates those "ANZAC's" who served our countries in World War 1.

During this war a great many people were killed. The results of the cruelty and violence in this great war were nothing short of horrendous. So, each year we take a moment to pay our respects to those brave soldiers who fought on our behalf all those years ago.

Today I would like to remember one of those very iconic ANZAC soldiers - John Simpson Kirkpatrick - and draw comparison to a man in the Bible who shows similar courage, commitment and compassion.

John Simpson Kirkpatrick:

06/07/1892-19/05/1915

In 1892 John was born in Durham, England to Scottish parents Sarah & Robert Kirkpatrick. John's Father was a merchant seaman. When John was 17 he decided to follow in his Fathers footsteps and he joined the merchant navy as a seaman.

In 1910, after a trip to Australia, John decided to settle here - in Sydney, NSW. After settling in Australia John moved around a lot taking different jobs all around our vast country until finally, in August 1914, He dropped his surname (to avoid being identified as a ship deserter) and joined the Australian Army as John Simpson.

After enlisting, he thought that he was going to be sent to England, but, due to the number of soldiers that had been sent to England, his ship was instead sent to Egypt. From there, John went to Gallipoli in 1915 and served as a medic. As a stretcher-bearer John found that the terrain made his job difficult, and even more treacherous than it already was. So, being the ingenuitive type, John found an abandoned donkey and commissioned it to service. He and his donkey served faithfully pulling injured soldiers out of the war zone on stretchers. The path they had to take was extremely dangerous, and was named accordingly - shrapnel gully. Some estimates suggest that John was alone responsible for rescuing up to 300 people.

On May 19, only three weeks into his mission, John was shot and killed while pulling another casualty to safety through shrapnel gully.

Values Immortalised in John Simpson:

When you stop and think about it, what are those values that have been immortalised by the life of John Simpson and many other ANZAC's?

- Mateship - their camaraderie and commitment to each other.
- Sacrifice - their sacrifice for the good of their mates.

From a Christian perspective it is interesting that John Simpson, one of the great ANZAC icons, was not a soldier, but a medic!

He is forever known as "the man with a donkey."

Jesus also told a story about a man with a donkey - the Good Samaritan.

Another Man with a Donkey:

Luke 10:25-37 - The Good Samaritan

In this passage we read of a lawyer coming to Jesus with a very pertinent question: 'what do I have to do in order to be saved?' Jesus respects the man, and his question, but turns the question back over for him to answer. The answer of the Lawyer is a fairly textbook Jewish answer - 'Love God and love neighbour.' Jesus affirms the response by saying to the man 'you have answered correctly.'

What?! 'Surely not Jesus,' you might be thinking. Doesn't Paul say that we are saved by grace? Isn't this Salvation by works? Well, let's not read the Apostle Paul into the gospel of Luke, let's hear him out.

The Lawyer, not yet getting the answer that he was looking for, asked another question: 'who is my neighbour?' So Jesus tells the parable.

The story, that answers the Lawyers question of who our neighbour is, was one of an act of courage, commitment and unconditional compassion by a foreigner.

It goes something like this: There was a man who had travelled along what was known to be a very dangerous road who had been robbed and left in a critical condition. Along the same road came a Priest, a "holy man," who did not offer the man any practical help. A little while later a Levite, also a "holy man" of the priestly lineage, came along the road and passed by without rendering the man any help.

Now, just to interrupt the storyline a little, at this point the Lawyer would have been anticipating that a lay person would be the one to come along and bring the tangible help that the man needed - rescuing him from the perils of his situation. But as we continue on, you will see that the story told of a different outcome than would have been popularly expected.

But, the story that Jesus told said that a Samaritan, coming along the same path as the two "holy men" before him, saw the man and had compassion on him.

In the days of Jesus Samaritans were looked upon as despised, dirty people - unworthy of a Jew. Notice these two passages as an example of this:

- John 4:1-45 - Jesus and His disciples ventured the way of Samaria - something that the Jews would not normally have done. As if that wasn't shocking enough to His disciples, Jesus then stopped to talk to a Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well about salvation. This was unheard of! The woman was shocked, and the disciples were shocked, because the Jewish people viewed the Samaritans as a kind of half-breed. They were, in their opinion, dirty, worthless and despised!
- John 8:48 - In the Jewish eyes a Samaritan was as good as Demon-possessed! They had, at the time and place of this passage, become so angry with Jesus that they were accusing Him of being as worthless as a Samaritan.

Yet, the story that Jesus told represents the Samaritan - the "unholy man" - as the one who had unconditional compassion for the man in dire need. This Samaritan man would have known that the favour would not have been returned to him had the situation been reversed, yet, he had compassion on him anyway, and helped the man in need.

Then, as if the story wasn't radical enough already, Jesus through in an added punch. The Samaritan went 'the extra mile' (so to speak). He paid for the man's lodging, for what would have been about 3 weeks in an average inn, and told the Innkeeper to do whatever was necessary and he would pay for the rest on his return.

This, from a financial perspective, was stupid! Extortion at the hands of Innkeepers in those days was not uncommon and he would have known that. Yet he knowingly opened himself up to extortion if it meant that this man would be taken care of.

This vulnerability and self-sacrifice, Jesus is pointing out in His story, is what the Kingdom of Heaven is all about!

Hebrews 12:14 says "Pursue holiness," for without it no one can see the Lord.

- The Jews were pursuing a different kind of holiness to that which Jesus represented in the parable. Jesus demonstrates the true kind of holiness, the which we should be pursuing, in this parable.

Matthew 5:20

- 'Unless your righteousness,' we could translate today, 'exceeds the righteousness of the Priest and the Levite - and is like that of the Samaritan - you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'

"God does not bestow the life of the Kingdom on those who fail to honour the command to bestow love." Mark Turner

Luke 6:27-36 - A higher calling!

"Love your enemies," Jesus says. "For if you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you?" "Love like your heavenly Father," He says. "Be kind to the unthankful and evil!" This is what you are called to emulate.

Conclusion:

John Simpson - the man with a donkey - was a good man, who did a good work. But as much as we would like to believe that he is the ANZAC Good Samaritan, he doesn't fit the bill (according to the passage).

As Australians we would typically see the equivalent of the Biblical expression 'neighbour' as our 'mates.' Those that we get along with. Those that are like us - that we identify with. But, according to Jesus, life in the kingdom means that our enemy is our neighbour! The outcast of society is our neighbour.

"This Samaritan represents Christ. Our Saviour manifested for us a love that the love of man can never equal. When we were bruised and dying, He had pity upon us. He did not pass us by on the other side, and leave us, helpless and hopeless, to perish. He did not remain in His holy, happy home, where He was beloved by all the heavenly host. He beheld our sore need, He undertook our case, and identified His interests with those of humanity. He died to save His enemies. He prayed for His murderers. Pointing to His own example, He says to His followers, "These things I command you, that ye love one another"; "as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." Ellen White, Christ's Object Lessons, pg 381

At the war memorial you will find a stone that is dedicated to the memory of John Simpson. On it you will read the inscription - "He gave his life that others may live."

Jesus gave His life that you may live! Accept Him today and choose the life of service that He is calling you to follow Him into.