

Hi everyone, nice to be sharing with you again. As you read this Lin and I are in Japan on an Oldies "Trip A Deal" tour. Not too many Shinto shrines I'm hoping. Might get all "temped out"

PRAYER:

Father, we thank you for all that you have done, all that we experience the good times, the struggles, and the life challenges, because in all the times, you are with us. Above all Father, we thank you for the amazing gift of your Son, our Lord Jesus, whose Spirit is our constant companion in all things. In his name we pray, our God.

Amen

SONG: *by Steve Stewart 1980*

1. Father I thank you for all that you've done
You gave your Son freely for me
and I praise you for calling me drawing me near
out of blindness you caused me to see.
2. Spirit of life you are God's holy fire
You've kindled my heart with your blaze
and I know you're refining me, changing my life
and by faith you're revealing your ways.
3. Jesus I need you as Lord of my life
I give all that I have unto you
Lord I want to come under your heavenly hand
And to praise you in all that I do.

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BIBLE READINGS:

- Luke 21:1—6

As Jesus looked up he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "Truly I tell you" he said, "this poor widow has put in more all than the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth: but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another, every one of them will be thrown down."

- 2 Corinthians 8:8

Paul writes: I am not commanding you but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you, through his poverty might become rich.

Message: When Less Is More

HopeNet is still in contact with some small Churches who are being asked to consider closing. Questions have been asked about the wisdom of this and we (HNSA) have been supporting those who want to remain true to their call to be “open” as witnesses to our Lord Jesus. Just being in place and having an open door matters to many older, struggling Churches and their towns. Many years of faithful service to local communities is at stake here, not to mention loyalty, service, and faithfulness.

Having been called to ministry in several smaller congregations, Lin and I are quite concerned at this development and along with HNSA have chosen to stand with them in this dark place.

The most experienced, and best known Pastor in this space would have to be the apostle Paul in his travels around the new world (eg Col 4:14-15). What a ministry!!!

In the reading from 2 Corinthians Paul reminds the Corinthian church that less is more in the way of Jesus who abandoned the things of the world and became a servant to all on the cross.

What validates Paul is in HIS ministry to the early (small) churches is that he has followed the example set by Jesus, viz 1 Corinthians 15:9 *“For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect.”* A servant leader, less is more.

NT Wright puts it this way. Walking as Christians in a post modern world “We must get used to living as those who have truly died and risen with Christ, so that our old self, having been thoroughly deconstructed (Paul), can be put back together, not by the agendas that the world presses upon us but by God’s Spirit (Luke 24:13-33)). Elsewhere, but in the same vein, he warns of the intellectual and cultural bullies who may try to rule by force and in doing so can neutralise the resurrection experience. This speaks into the current small church situation. But as Jesus’ observation of the widow’s gift reminds us it is the attitude of the heart that counts...Matt 20 :26

I am also looking for Old Testament wisdom along the same lines. King David is one example. His behaviour with Uriah and Bathsheba displays the misuse of power and the abuse of trust at its worst. Adultery, murder, cheating etc. You could be forgiven for thinking he was unredeemable. But God had other ideas (a messianic parallel). But the most memorable thing about the story is history’s best and most telling impeachment. It comes from God via Nathan the Prophet. 2 Samuel 12:1—7 *The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him he said, There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor, the rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised and it grew up with his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.*

When Less Is More

Now a traveller came to the rich man, but he refrained from taking one of his flock to prepare a meal for the traveller who had come to him. Instead he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for his guest.

David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan. "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for the lamb four times over because he did such a thing and had no pity."

Then Nathan said to David "You are the man!"

David's mistake was at the outset in not being with his army, as the leader. If he had been doing his duty – no problem – no Bathsheba experience. Strangely it is the mercenary soldier Uriah who displays real leadership. He declines to go to the comforts of home on the basis that his men in the field have no comforts so why should he indulge himself. Not so with David. The Less Is More is clearly shown here by Uriah.

It is in The Less Is More understanding that we see in Jesus. As our Lord pointed out to the disciples near the temple (a place where he had found a more-for-me attitude, John 2 and Matt 21) probably the motivation for this Kingdom message which the church does not always employ. But which Jesus made very clear to the disciples when they lauded the beauty and grandness of the temple—IE that place which would be levelled and replaced by the spiritual victory of the cross. Less of this world, and more of the next!

PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD:

Father, recent news from Nigeria disturbs us . We continue to hear of the murder of your people, and it's a mystery that this should continue in a country with a strong Christian heritage. We pray for peace Lord, and for the safety of your people. In Jesus' name, Lord, be with them all.

Amen

SONG: *by Jack W Hayford*

1. Praise the name of Jesus, praise the Son of God
Glory, glory be to Christ our King,
Jesus Christ, Son of God. Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
2. Praise the name of Jesus, praise the Lamb who died,
Glory, glory be to Christ our King
Jesus Christ, Lamb who died. Jesus Christ is the Lamb who died.
3. Praise the name of Jesus, praise our Risen Lord,
Glory, glory be to Christ our King
Jesus Christ, Risen Lord. Jesus Christ is the Risen Lord.

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When Less Is More

BLESSING:

For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have (2 Corinthians 8:12)

And Phil 2:7-8

Again Lord we pray for your blessing—show us how we can be spirit filled, and know the joy and peace of having less of this world and more of your spirit.

Amen

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