

Before next time...

Remember God's people living in exile in Babylon? Its not easy living away from home. Here are 5 different attitudes we could have...

Attitude 1 - assimilate the city. Christians could give in and adopt the pagan culture's values. Wanting to blend in we could just become like those around us. By the time of Samson (Judges 14-16) that's what God's people Israel had done.

Attitude 2 - reflect the city. Christians could still attend church and keep up the practices of Christians, but still give way to the culture's values. The story of Micah and his mother in Judges 17-18 is a good example of this.

Attitude 3 - despise the city. In an attempt to remain pure and untainted some Christians withdraw from pagan society. The prophets in Elijah's day did that when they hid in caves from evil King Ahab and his Queen Jezebel in 1 Kings 18.

Attitude 4 - ignoring the city. Some Christians leave it to God to transform the city preferring to concentrate on building up their churches. They encourage everyone to go into the ministry but see no need for Christians to be good at business or artists or nurses or cleaners. The prophet Hananiah is a good example in Jer. 28.

Attitude 5 - loving the city. This is where Christians engage fully with the culture but they don't compromise. They show the world an alternative way of living based on the gospel of Christ. Jeremiah's letter in Jeremiah 29 is a good example.

1. Which attitude do people you know generally take and why?
 2. Consider Attitude 5. How can you and St Andrew's stand out from the culture in the way we understand money, relationships, sex and human life and seek to show our culture a different more satisfying and God-honouring way to live?
 3. Consider this from Harvie Conn: 'On a tract of earth's land purchased with the blood of Christ, Jesus the kingdom developer has begun building new housing. As a sample of what will be, he has erected a model home of what will eventually fill the urban neighbourhood. How he invites the... world into that model home to take a look at what will be. The church is the occupant of that model home, inviting neighbours into its open door to to Christ. Evangelism is when the signs are put saying, "Come in and look around"... In this model home we lout our new lifestyle as citizens of the heavenly city that one day will come. We do not abandon our jobs or desert the city that is... we are to 'seek the peace and prosperity of the city' (Jer. 29:7).'
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Session 7 Justice A People For Others

Recap and Bible Study

Last time we looked at how the gospel impacts our work. We also raised the issue of loving our town and demonstrating God's concern for the marginalised in our community. Have people had further ideas? What might be your next step?

- Read together Luke 10:25-37

1. On the basis of Jesus' teaching, who is our neighbour?
2. Shouldn't we help members of our family and Christian community first? (cf Galatians 6:10). How does the story Jesus told help us?
3. What was teacher of the law really interested in? How does this parable prove to us just how unable we are even to keep the second command (cf v25-29)?! How does this parable show us *our* need for mercy?
4. How does Jesus illustrate what the true motive should be for showing mercy to our neighbour?
5. What do we learn from the quotes below?

'The impious Galileans (Christians) support not only their poor, but ours as well, everyone can see that our people lack aid from us.' *Roman Emperor Julian (c360 AD)*

'During the great epidemic, most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves... heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their very need and ministering to them in Christ... Many, in nursing and curing others, transferred their death to themselves and died in their stead... The [pagans] behaved in the very opposite way. At the first onset of the disease, they pushed the sufferers away and fled even from their dearest, throwing them in to the roads before they were dead.' *Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria (c 260 AD)*

Watch the DVD

Use this space to jot anything down you find helpful from Tim Keller

Was there anything from the DVD which was new to you, or which you thought was particularly striking? Anything you were not sure about?

1. In the DVD Tim said 'Shalom means total flourishing in absolutely every dimension: physically, relationally, socially and spiritually.' In what practical ways can you and your group 'resolve to have shalom felt everywhere... and begin to reweave the broken fabric of creation'? What can you as a group (or church) bring into your neighbourhood that is uniquely helpful?

2. Benjamin Fernando from Sri Lanka writes, "There is no such thing as a separate individual gospel and a separate social gospel. There is only one gospel - a redeemed man in a reformed society. Social problems assume great importance in Christianity than in Buddhism or Hinduism. The theory of karma and rebirth gives a fairly reasonable explanation for social inequalities of this life which on the one hand are consequences of the previous life and on the other can be compensated for in the next. But to a Christian there is only one earthly life and so social problems have to be dealt with now or never."

Do you agree that 'social problems have to be dealt with now or never'? Why or why not?

4. The Bible points to three causal factors for poverty: i) injustice and oppression; ii) circumstantial calamity; iii) personal failure. Do you agree? Can you give examples of these from the Bible and from your experience?

5. Tim said, 'It's natural to want to help people who are like you, who like you and who you like.'

What would it mean to help people who are not like you, who you do not like you and who you do not like?

6. Someone once said to the 18th Century American Jonathan Edwards that they couldn't afford to give to the poor. Edwards responded by applying Galatians 6:2: 'If our neighbour's difficulties and necessities be much greater than our own, and we see that he is not like to be otherwise relieved, we should be willing to suffer with him, and to take part of his burden on ourselves; else how is that rule of bearing one another's burdens fulfilled? If we are never obliged to relieve others' burdens, but when we can do it without burdening ourselves, then how do we bear our neighbour's burden, when we bear no burden at all?'

What do you make of this? What could this mean for you and your group?

Spend time in prayer

- pray for each other: that we might be aware of the needs of our town and our neighbour, and generously love those around us.
- pray for each other's needs, and remember to pray during the week.