

## CONSIDER HIM!

Isaiah 53:2b-6; Matthew 5:3-10; Hebrews 12:1-3; Matthew 10:28-30

Wangaratta, 16/8/15

I wonder who your heroes are this morning. Do you have people you look up to and admire? People who have influenced the way you do things? Those you try to model your own life on?

Victor Frankl is one of my heroes – even though he lived before my time. As a Jew, he was imprisoned during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and watched as many of his family lost their lives in Nazi concentration camps, including his wife, his father and brother. I can't imagine what that would be like, or what he must have gone through; firstly, just to survive, but then to come through an experience like that and not be bitter and resentful, full of hate.

But he did. After the war he completed his studies and worked as a psychiatrist, helping others deal with their emotional difficulties. And it's this attitude that makes him a hero for me. I recently managed to locate and download a book he wrote I've always wanted to read: "*Man's Search for Meaning*." In it, Frankl says that the last of all human freedoms is the freedom to choose how we respond to the circumstances we face. We cannot always choose our circumstances; no-one would choose a concentration camp. But he made a deliberate choice not to allow the barbarity of others to determine his response. That makes him a hero in my eyes. That's an attitude I aspire to. I wish I could say I've always been successful in achieving it!

The Bible has some obvious heroes, too. I admire *Joseph* who maintained his purity and integrity in very difficult and trying circumstances. I admire *Nehemiah* for his skill and determination – again in the face of opposition and adversity. He pushed on and saw those walls restored and his people regain a sense of hope. I love *Barnabas* in the New Testament; always encouraging somebody. We wouldn't have the Apostle Paul (most likely) without Barnabas's example and mentoring.

Some of my heroes have been people I've known who lived out their Christian faith as shining examples to the rest of us. What an encouragement, to have someone we can look to, and look up to, and see that what we know as a principle can actually be lived out in daily life. I wonder who your heroes are this morning.

Of course, through time and history, one person stands out, and stands above all others. If we want an example, or a role model, of someone who did it tough and did it well; we need look no further than *Jesus*. I wonder how often the things we admire in others reflect the transformation Jesus brought to their lives. Quite often, in the lives of those who are my living heroes today.

Our text this morning, and the title of my message invites us to "*Consider Him*". And my Bible readings are a little self-indulgent, as I've gathered together some of my favourite passages that place Jesus in the spotlight. I don't know what your week has been like; probably something of a mixture if it reflected the normal cycle of events these days. Perhaps you considered a variety of options in managing your week.

## CONSIDER HIM!

Isaiah 53:2b-6; Matthew 5:3-10; Hebrews 12:1-3; Matthew 10:28-30

Wangaratta, 16/8/15

“Consider him, who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” Let’s follow this great advice this morning. Let me invite you firstly to

### I. Consider His Character.

Because character largely determines behaviour. And it’s Jesus’ character that draws us to him, and makes him our number one hero today. What do we see in Jesus as we meet him in the gospels, and come to know him personally? As those first disciples did, we find him to be

#### A. Strong and Reliable.

When Jesus was with them, his followers were confident and focussed; even if they often missed the mark and allowed their frail humanity to bubble to the surface. When he wasn’t with them, they easily went to water. See them out on the Sea of Galilee; almost the “natural habitat” for those who were fishermen. Jesus *was* actually with them when the storm broke, but he was asleep after a busy day, at peace in himself, in spite of the circumstances.

His disciples were anything but “at peace”. Their first response to the storm was a good one. Let’s bring Jesus into this situation. He woke, he spoke, and everything was calm. Except, maybe, the minds of those disciples. “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him?”<sup>1</sup> They’d never known anyone like this before. Neither have we.

So strong. And reliable. He still has power over the storms of life that sometimes strike us, sometimes with little warning. “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever,” we read in Hebrews.<sup>2</sup> “Like a fortress, never changing,” we sang a little while ago. Such a comfort in our ever-changing world!

Our next pair of qualities stands in real contrast, and serves to expand our understanding and appreciation of Jesus’ character. He is also

#### B. Gentle and Humble.

Beautiful qualities in themselves. Quite amazing as they stand alongside strength and reliability. Jesus himself identifies these two, which is, in itself, astounding. Who else can stand and say, “Look at me, I’m humble!”? And yet he does; and no-one feels we want to point out what would be an obvious contradiction from anyone else.

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 8:27

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 13:8

## CONSIDER HIM!

Isaiah 53:2b-6; Matthew 5:3-10; Hebrews 12:1-3; Matthew 10:28-30

Wangaratta, 16/8/15

I read a great definition, or explanation of true humility recently, in a little booklet, I think it was by Tim Keller. It went something like this: “True humility is not thinking less of myself; it’s thinking of *myself less*.”

Thinking less of myself sounds a lot like low self esteem; when I know, as his child, God esteems me greatly. Thinking of myself less is a real challenge. It involves a shift in focus. And that’s good for me. It means placing someone else in the centre of my universe. It means not constantly evaluating *my* feelings, *my* likes and dislikes, how others are treating *me*. I’m a better person when I actually manage to think of myself less. But I find this to be a temporary and rather fleeting state of mind, and my natural selfishness is never far away. This is what makes true humility deceptively complex, and difficult to attain.

I’m fascinated by what Jesus says as he invites us to come to him. Of all the many qualities we identify and admire in him, Jesus says, “Come to me. Learn from me.” And he nominates *gentleness and humility* as the qualities he most wants us to incorporate into our own characters. Perhaps he understands these are our greatest lack.

Strength... and gentleness. Can these two exist side by side? Yes they can! We see them in the character of Jesus, beautifully. And we see these inner qualities manifest in his attitude to others and the way he treats them. He is my hero. I want to be like him.

Lastly – and we could easily spend the whole of our time just considering his character – Jesus was

### C. Committed to his Father.

He’s a great example of someone who thought of himself less. His very presence on earth among us spoke of that commitment. One day, we’ll know just what he left behind. We know now, just what he came to. Paul tells us “he made himself nothing. He took the nature and role of a servant. And as one of us, he humbled himself further; he became “obedient to death – even death on a cross.”<sup>3</sup>

Here is the ultimate expression of “thinking of himself less”. He had everything to lose; nothing to gain, from a personal standpoint. He was committed to his Father. See him wrestle in prayer with the personal cost of that commitment, in the Garden, the night before they killed him. He came to earth with his eyes open. He rode into Jerusalem, knowing exactly what was ahead. “Nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done!”<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> See Philippians 2:6-8

<sup>4</sup> Luke 22:42

## CONSIDER HIM!

Isaiah 53:2b-6; Matthew 5:3-10; Hebrews 12:1-3; Matthew 10:28-30

Wangaratta, 16/8/15

What kind of man is this, willing to make this level of commitment, knowing just what it would cost him? How shabby our own characters sometimes appear, when we consider his. Let's turn now to

### II. Consider His Teaching.

And I want us to note firstly, in his teaching,

#### A. He Overturned the World's Values.

And we see he did this in two quite different ways. He gave us the magnificent "*Sermon on the Mount*", from which we get the "*Beatitudes*" in Matthew 5; and then we see him physically enter the temple and overturn the money-changers' tables and drive out those selling doves there, with a whip!

You see, the world's values had infiltrated the people's place of worship. He said, "It is written 'my house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a den of thieves."<sup>5</sup> So he drove them out.

What do you think most likely happened, probably within days of Jesus' death? Do you think the money-changers and merchants said to themselves, "He makes a very good point, actually! We should consider some other line of business!"?

I bet they set up again, initially on the footpaths outside the temple. Soon, one of them would approach a priest, or maybe the high priest himself, about moving back inside the facilities; as an act of service, of course, to those needing the special temple money, or an appropriate animal for sacrifice. Perhaps the priests approached them, looking for the kickbacks that had become part of the system.

And from Jesus' times to our own, the world continues to try and bring its values and practices into God's places of worship; and we sometimes help it.

The Beatitudes confront us with just how different, and incompatible, these two systems really are. We're used to what they teach us, and we love them; but I wonder if we realise just how confronting, and revolutionary they were to those who heard them the first time. They still confront us today. Let's consider just the first three for a moment:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

---

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 21:13

## CONSIDER HIM!

Isaiah 53:2b-6; Matthew 5:3-10; Hebrews 12:1-3; Matthew 10:28-30

Wangaratta, 16/8/15

Who are the “poor in spirit,” “those who mourn,” the meek”? Does that describe us this morning? Are we conscious of our utter dependence on God? Do we mourn, with a godly sorrow for our sinful attitudes and behaviour? Are we meek in our willingness to submit to God and to one another?

Do we hunger and thirst for righteousness, are we merciful, are we pure in our hearts, are we peacemakers by nature and action, are we ready to suffer for doing right? Look at the blessings promised to those who reflect these qualities. Consider what we will miss if we decide to follow the culture of our world instead.

We’re not surprised the people decided to get rid of him. He overturned the world’s values, and

### **B. He Proclaimed the Father’s Kingdom.**

Consistently. Always. It’s nothing like the kingdoms of this world. It starts small. It lives and grows in the hearts and minds of God’s children. Its value cannot be estimated; sell everything in order to gain it. It’s an invisible kingdom. Its constituents aren’t always easy to recognise.

Our king has an enemy whose mission in life is to disrupt God’s kingdom and his subjects. He sows his evil seeds, and seeks to infiltrate God’s beautiful kingdom in order to disrupt it. We should not fear. Greater is he who is in us, than he who is in the world.

At God’s appointed time there will be a harvest, and those who are his own will be gathered to himself. Only the Father knows when this appointed time will be. He expects his subjects to be living in faithful obedience when his Son returns.

### **C. He Offers Hope.**

Hope is often the missing ingredient as we confront the almost daily dilemmas of life. How many of the tragedies that seem to bombard us on a daily basis – rising crime rates, drug addiction, political turmoil – are the symptoms of a society without hope? Look at the beatitudes again. Hope for the poor in spirit. Hope for those who mourn; God will comfort them! Hope for the meek; those who steadfastly refuse to push their own agendas, or clamber over others on their way to the top; those who look for opportunities for quiet, unnoticed service. God will give them, what others strive for.

Those who show mercy will receive it. Those who seek peace will be identified as God’s children. Those on the receiving end of bad stuff will ultimately gain God’s kingdom. Those whose hearts are pure before God will actually get to see him. Don’t you want a pure heart?

## CONSIDER HIM!

Isaiah 53:2b-6; Matthew 5:3-10; Hebrews 12:1-3; Matthew 10:28-30

Wangaratta, 16/8/15

We know Jesus' teachings. We've read them in the gospels, some of us, many times. I wonder how well we've taken his teaching to heart. One of my lecturers from college use to say, "Learning is change." How sad to only know as facts those truths Jesus gives us to change our lives.

In these last few minutes, as we turn our eyes to Jesus, let's

### III. Consider His Invitation.

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Such a kind, and unbelievably generous invitation. And so wide in its scope. It's an invitation

#### A. To Those Burdened by Sin.

And I want to suggest this morning it's an invitation we need to take up, probably on a daily basis. How easy it is to excuse ourselves. I was tired. It's just the way God made me! (That's a good one, isn't it?) I couldn't help it. I was provoked. And these are just the outward, more visible expressions of our inner sinfulness. What about those unkind thoughts, those less than pleasing to God attitudes we've allowed to take root in our hearts, and become part of our natures?

If your burden this morning is one of sin; and God has identified it, or you just know it's there, hear Jesus' invitation to come. And know that he's prepared the way back for you.

"He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."<sup>6</sup>

Why don't you give your burden of sin to him this morning, and receive his rest in exchange?

It's an invitation

#### B. To Those Saddened by Circumstances.

Again, I suspect many of us find ourselves in that place this morning. And again, I want to claim the vast scope of the invitation. It doesn't really matter what your particular

---

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 53:5, 6

**CONSIDER HIM!**

**Isaiah 53:2b-6; Matthew 5:3-10; Hebrews 12:1-3; Matthew 10:28-30**

Wangaratta, 16/8/15

circumstances are. And you don't have to explain them to anyone else. Jesus knows. He understands, and his offer is to all people, and for all circumstances. It's very easy to take up.

His invitation is

**C. To Those Weary with Life.**

It takes its toll at times, doesn't it? And the effects of our experiences are cumulative. Jesus offers us rest; and we note from his invitation, just what this rest involves.

His illustration of the yoke would have been clear to those who heard it that day. A yoke is an instrument of sharing. In exchange for our tiredness and burdens, Jesus offers us, not so much a holiday, as an invitation to join him in his mission, and to allow him to share in the circumstances of your life.

Would your life look different today, knowing Jesus was right beside you, sharing your burden, providing the bulk of the strength and the other resources you need?

In the light of our sometimes desperate need, and Jesus' amazing invitation, how silly are we, if we say, in effect, "I think I can manage this one by myself!"?

As you look at your own life and its difficulties this morning; as we as a church explore the options to resolve our shared issues, let's "consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that we don't grow weary and lose heart." And let's hear, and receive personally Jesus' kind invitation:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."