

Pt 1: **Called to Care**

“Responding to the Plight of the Poor”

1 Peter 2:21 *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.*

Jesus suffered death so we have a life to live for Him and to live out our lives following His example!

The word ‘called’ comes from the ancient Greek word **“kaleo.”** Meaning; ‘being called – destined – summoned – commissioned to a divine purpose.’

Luke 4:18 *The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed.*

Luke 19:10 *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.*

We were created for God and His purposes.

A true authentic follower of Jesus cares for what Jesus cares for and Jesus cared for others. We have been called, commissioned and summoned to care for others.

How we respond matters deeply to the vulnerable poor and marginalised and to God too.

...Child Poverty

132 million children are born each year - 1 in 4 are born into a family that exists on less than AUD \$2 a day. In developing countries, 1 in 3 children are born into severe poverty and conditions of almost unimaginable suffering and need.

- There are an estimated 158 million children between the ages of 5 – 14 engaged in child labour.
- Every 30 seconds an African child dies from malaria.
- Some 2 billion children are living with HIV. And roughly 15 million of these children have lost one or both of their parents to AIDS.
- Everyday more than 24,000 children under the age of 5 die from preventable causes.
- More than 101 million children of primary school age don’t go to school.

- Around 20 million children under 5 worldwide are severely malnourished.
- In the developing world, 1 in every 5 children aged between 5 and 14 work to earn money for their families and half of these work full time.
- An estimated 2.5 billion people do not have access to proper sanitation facilities.

Our response surely has to be motivated by a ‘*holy discontent*’ that propels us into action. A holy discontent that screams within us to do something!

...Being compelled to care, the Bible calls ‘*compassion.*’

The Greek word for compassion in the original writings of the Bible is the word “*splanchnizomai*” - meaning to literally have our “**bowels yearn and ache.**” It is like having an “**intense craving that causes us pain deep within us.**”

Jesus was a man ‘*full*’ of compassion who was compelled to care with grace and mercy.

Matthew 9:36 *When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

14:14 - *When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick.*

15:32 - *Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."*

20:34 - *Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him.*

Mark 1:41 *Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. "I am willing," He said. "Be clean!"*

Here is the point - “*The closer we get to Jesus the more we will care for the things that He cares for.*”

The opposite is also true - “*The further we get from Jesus the less we care about the things He cares about!*”

Philippians 2:19-21 *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. ²⁰I have no one else like him, who takes a **genuine interest in your welfare.** ²¹For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.*

Mostly, this is how we are...mostly interested in ourselves, and our own world.

Philippians 2:3-9

We have all been “*Kaleod*” called to care by following Jesus’ example.

...We must cultivate compassionate hearts.

The first step in opening our hearts to the poor is to open our eyes to them. Expanding our hearts always starts with what we choose to see.

Opening our eyes eventually makes our hearts swell with the seeds of compassion, but what cultivates that seed is to personally touch the poor through acts of practical service.

Proverbs 31:20 *She opens her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her filled hands to the needy (whether in body, mind or spirit).*

There is one distinctive characteristic of Jesus’ ministry. It’s His incredible ability to bring good news to poor souls by removing barriers to social status.

...We must return to the way of Jesus.

Jesus was blind! People knew Jesus saw beyond their label.

As a church we must return to this ministry of Jesus!

Psalms 147:3 *He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.*

Luke 4:18 *The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed.*

Jesus built a community of faith which was to be inclusive not exclusive. A community motivated by love, hope and faith.

...Challenge

We can’t fix every problem - but the ones we can - we must!

Personal appeal from Pr Mike...

I believe the Church (our church) is meant to be a redemptive centre that offers love, hope and faith. We are to be a community of authentic Christ followers who are committed to the Great Commandment and to the Great Commission.

I believe we have a responsibility therefore to address the issues of poverty and injustice. Yes, we must proclaim the gospel, and this will always be our primary focus, but we are also to help relieve the pain and suffering that is of plague like proportions in our world today.

As a church across our four locations, I appeal to you, will you join with me and together to go on a journey advancing the kingdom of God throughout the world, in our own communities and city? A journey that reaches and transforms the hearts of those so far away from God.

How we respond matters. *It matters deeply to the poor and to the vulnerable, the abused and the abandoned. Our response matters to God and should matter to us!*

If we are to truly follow the footprints of Jesus, we will then walk across the great divide of prosperity and into poverty actively caring for others as Jesus was compelled to care!

That is why missions is not something we 'do' as a Church but who we 'are!'

Mike.