

maranatha

God's call to make a Difference

The Gospel of Jesus is about life and transformation. When we encounter Jesus we are transformed and those who choose His life become life-givers with the power to transform the world in which we live.

The amazing mystery of God is that He has chosen to fulfil His plan for creation through His Church - people seen as ordinary in the eyes of the world, but who are extraordinary in the eyes of God. The world sees our weakness; the Lord sees the life of Jesus in His children manifest in the power of His Spirit. We so often believe the accuser who points to our sin and says, "Who are you?" We must know that the Lord, in His wisdom, has chosen to reveal His glory through frail human vessels "*...to show that this all surpassing power comes from God and not from us*" (2 Cor 4.7).

Called to BE different

Jesus says, "*Unless you are born again you cannot see the Kingdom of God...no-one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.*" (Jn 3. 3,5). When we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives and receive His Spirit we are spiritually 'born again'! Paul says, "*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*" (2 Cor 5.17 NLT). As Christians we have a new spiritual identity and the power to live the life of Jesus. In fact He says to His followers, "*..anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works...*" (Jn 14.12). For those who have grown up in the Christian

faith there is a danger of failing to enter into the 'fullness of life' that Jesus promises and, sadly, there are many churchgoers today who have not been led into the renewed and empowered life of God's Spirit. There are no half measures in following Jesus.

Jesus teaches that when we are born again we become enemies of the world. *"The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it...I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you."* (Jn 15.19). Far from this being a cause for concern, John encourages us, *"See how much the Father loves us that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are! The reason the world does not recognise us is that they don't know him."* (1Jn 2.1) and Paul states clearly, *"all believers will suffer persecution..."*

Called to LIVE differently

The Kingdom of God is in conflict with the Kingdom of the World. The first is ruled by God, the second is ruled, at this time, by satan, the prince of this world. As followers of Jesus we belong to the Kingdom of God, which means we are in a spiritual battle from the moment we change our allegiance from the world to Christ. Jesus has shown us the way to live in the world whilst not being a part of it and He has given us the gift of His Spirit to empower us to live this way. We pray as He taught us, *"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* (Matt 6.10)

The Love of God transforms our hearts and gives us the power to love all people and to express the love of God where there is hatred and discord. Jesus says, *"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God"* (Matt 5.9). The *"sons of God"* have the character of their Father because they have been transformed by His Spirit, the Spirit of peace.

The Word of God transforms our minds to see everything as God sees and gives us the power to discern and to know God's will and His wisdom. Paul says, *"We no longer regard things from a worldly point of view"* (2Cor 5.16). Our greatest need in the Western Church is to be delivered from the spirit of unbelief which holds our minds captive and resistant to the true power of God's Word. Our minds are the battle ground onto which satan pitches most of his attacks. However, *"we do not wage war as the world does. We have divine weapons to demolish strongholds and every pretension that sets itself up against God. And we take captive every thought and subject it to Christ."* (2 Cor 10.3-5).

Although we will be hated by the 'system' of the world, the fact that we are different is the very thing that attracts others to Christ. It is well established that the majority of individuals who give their lives to Christ began their journey to Him through the influence of a Christian who was visibly different. This is the testimony of the Early Church: *"Everyone around was in awe – all*

those wonders and signs done through the Apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common...people in general liked what they saw....."(Acts 2.43-47 The Message).

Called to MAKE a difference

Jesus says, *"You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world..."* (Matt 5.13,14). The presence of salt and light has an immediate effect on the surroundings. Salt causes a transformation in the substance it is added to. Light makes visible things which were previously hidden. It brings relief and clarity to the fear and confusion of darkness. Jesus calls every follower of His to make a difference in the world. Indeed He gives a severe warning to the one who has received His gift but buries it (Matt. 25.24-30). He says *"To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away"* (Matt. 25.29 NLT).

Every Christian believer makes a difference in the place where they live, work and worship simply by **being** the child of God that they are, living the life of Christ. St. Francis urges us *"Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words"*. Paul is also clear that it is transformed lives that preach the Gospel of Christ more powerfully than words. To the believers in Corinth he wrote *"You show that you are a letter from Christ...written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts"* (2 Cor. 3.3).

Every Christian believer is also called to make a difference through their prayer and action. Jesus says *"The Son can do nothing by himself; he can only do what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does"* (Jn. 5.19). In the same way we who have the life of Christ are to do as He does. Jesus made it clear, *"Apart from me you can do nothing"* (Jn. 15.5) *"Everything is possible for him who believes"* (Mk. 9.23).

Called to UNITY to make a difference

When individual Christian believers affirm their oneness with others in the Body of Christ and actively pray and work in unity, the transforming power of God is manifest in amazing ways. Jesus says *"I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in My Name, there I am with them"* (Matt. 18.19-20). It is a spiritual certainty that where there is unity between God's people there is blessing (Ps. 133).

There must also be a unity in our prayer and action. The Apostles, James and John, both pointed to the impossibility of being a true follower of Jesus without the demonstration of faith in action (Jas. 2.17, 1 Jn 3.17-18).

Prayer and Action in the Maranatha Community

In the Maranatha Community we have been influenced by John Wesley who called believers to a balance of personal holiness and social righteousness. We have also been greatly encouraged by Mother Teresa's words for our Community many years ago – *"If you pray without serving your prayers are in vain; if you serve without praying your service is in vain. Go forward and pray and serve in the power of the Holy Spirit"*.

Maranatha Prayer Network – Prayer is fundamental to our Community life. We pray for each other every day and strongly encourage all members to be part of the Prayer Network particularly by forming a Prayer Cell, ideally with several others of different traditions, which meet regularly.

Trumpet Call – Maranatha strongly encourages all believers to be active in their local churches and the community where they live, expressing the love of Jesus in action. Countless personal initiatives have been taken over the years. We also believe it is vital for all Christians to actively engage in influencing our national life by speaking for truth, righteousness and justice in the nation. 'Trumpet Call' is a resource for the equipping of the Church with information to direct prayer and action.

Prayer for Peace

*Lord, make me an instrument
of your peace;
where there is hatred,
let me show love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is despair, hope,
and where there is sadness, joy.
Divine master
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning
that we are pardoned,
and in dying
that we are born to eternal life.*

St. Francis of Assisi

Prayer for Holiness

*"Stay with me, and then I shall begin
to shine as You shine: so to shine as to
be a light to others. The light, O Jesus,
will be all from You. None of it will be
mine. It will be You who shines
through me upon others. O let me
thus praise You, in the way which You
love best, by shining on all those
around me. Give light to them as well
as to me; light them with me, through
me. Teach me to show forth Your
praise, Your truth, Your will. Make me
preach You without preaching – not by
words, but by my example and by the
catching force, the sympathetic
influence, of what I do – by my visible
resemblance to Your saints, and the
evident fullness of the love which my
heart bears to You".*

John Henry Newman

Linda Stalley