

Small Group Notes 23 April 2017. Theme: 'Joy through Suffering'

Key Words: Resurrection, Joy, Suffering, Faith, Mission, Daily Life.

Welcome

- Leader: Christ is Risen! Reply: ***He is Risen Indeed!*** Explain that the Church celebrates Easter for seven Sundays so this greeting is appropriate until Pentecost (4th June).
- What has caused you to "rejoice" over the past week?

Worship

- Read Psalm 16 responsively (See attached , words in bold are read by the group).
- Sundays "focus text" was 1 Peter 1:3-9. Read Peter (1 Peter 1:6-7) again. Why is faith in the risen Christ a source of joy even in the midst of suffering, grief and trials?
- Sing or listen to your favourite Easter Hymn.

Word

Read John 20:19-31

1. What were the disciples afraid of? What are your fears?
2. When in the Gospel did Jesus last impart "peace" to the disciples? What was the context? (Clue: we often that passage at funerals). Discuss – *"over 200 years of Christian witness affirm that in moments of fear and deep distress it is in Christ's nature to speak peace into our hearts"* (Personal testimony may be appropriate).
3. Thomas wanted to trust in Christ but needed a personal experience (relationship) with Christ. Without a personal relationship with Jesus we are unable to trust in Him. Ask one or two members to share meaningful experiences of their own relationship with Christ.
4. Disciples are sent in the same way Jesus was sent (20:21). Practically, this means that *"To be a disciple of Jesus is, crucially, to be learning from Jesus how to do your job as Jesus himself would do it. ... if you dislike or even hate your job, a condition epidemic in our culture, the quickest way out of that job, or to joy in it, is to do it as Jesus would"*¹. How can the church help you make that happen? (This applies also to the retired, unemployed, etc – all are invited, in the words of Trevor Hudson, to "claim your weekday life" for God.)

Works

- Commit to praying for a person or group who are suffering (they may be personally known to you or you may have read about their plight).
- Experiment with this exercise in the weeks to come: *"I encourage you to claim your weekday life for God. Converting your daily workplace, wherever it may be, is the beginning of the adventure. Experiment with this challenge tomorrow morning. See yourself as a servant of the Holy One sent on a mission into the world. Declare your site of work, in the name of Jesus, to be a sanctuary. Ask that the compassion and truth of Christ be manifest in all you do and say. Refuse to co-operate with those things you know to be wrong. Let your interactions be characterised by sensitive and courteous service. Strive to excel in whatever you do. Converse frequently with Christ about your daily tasks, and seek his wisdom and directions to be a gospel-minister."*²

¹ The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life In God by Dallas Willard

² Invitations to Abundant Life: in search of life at its best by Trevor Hudson

Psalm 16: 5-11

(An Old Testament priest, who has no land and is dependent on God and God's people [hence the reference to "boundary lines"; he has no property, no boundary lines and yet feels blessed], prays this prayer).

Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup;

you have made my lot secure.

⁶ The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;

surely I have a delightful inheritance.

⁷ I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;

even at night my heart instructs me.

⁸ I have set the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,

because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

¹¹ You have made known to me the path of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.