

A Word in Season - "Completion"

Okay, so this morning, we continue our beginning of the year series, a word in season.



Two weeks ago we began with doubt and how many doubts have as their basis, disappointments.

Then last...



Last week was about speech and free speech, and how wherever we fall on the issue of free speech, the gospel is non-negotiable.

And I talked have that inner conviction, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that if we are ever compelled to be silent about Jesus we will obey rather than human beings.

So this morning to introduce where I'm going I've got more pictures for you:

This is an image of the proposed Katikati bypass.
A roundabout not from here and then rejoining the main highway at Wharawhara Rd.

Now there is a point to all of these images.
I wonder if anyone can figure out the connection between them all - what do they all have in common?

Tell the person next to you.

(If you need a clue, start with the first one).

So I hope it wasn't too obscure.

The Sagrada Familia began as I said construction in 1882, and is 139 years later is yet to be completed.

Then Bruce Lee although filmed 100 minutes of his last movie, died before he could complete it

Then we have the Katikati Bypass... which may well compete with the Sagrada Familia in terms of completion dates.

These are all incomplete projects.
Someone started something but it's never been finished.

And when you think about it, what's God's big project?

He has a project called 'Creation'.
In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth.¹

We also know that this creation project has been polluted and smeared.
This world is not as it should be.
It's like parts of it are good but then large part are defective.
It's like someone started out with a grand design and stopped half-way through.

It's no surprise people wonder at the moment about the future of the planet.
And many people are scared.
Some are terrified.

¹ Genesis 1:1

So they look around and say, “Who can help us???”
They are saying to governments, you must act.

Richard Dawkins is a well known atheist and professor of biology.
I don't know if you've seen or heard him on Youtube or the internet but he is very
zealous in his advancement of atheism. Dawkins would be an atheist evangelist.
When asked about the meaning and purpose in the universe he said this:

“In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and
genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are
going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any
justice.

*The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should
expect... there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good,
nothing but pitiless indifference.”*

What Scripture says is God is an artist, an architect and an ethicist, and He has a
plan for this planet.

This is God's planet.
Did you know this?

This planet is our ultimate destination.
Did you know that?

If Adam and Eve didn't sin, where would they be living today?
On Earth.

More than that, Jesus loves this planet.
He created.
Was born in it.
Died for it.
Was raised from the dead in it.
Ascended to His Father from it.
He is still present in the world through His Holy Spirit.
He will not abandon it and will return to redeem it.

If you have your Bibles turn with me to the Book of Revelation.
Chapter 21 verse 1:

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”[that word ‘new’ is a ‘renewed’
in the sense of having a new and better quality] for the first heaven and the
first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

No more pandemics. No more lockdowns. No climate emergency. No more extinction. No more polluted waterways. No more starvation or wars. Not only that, but parts of our planet that are uninhabitable will become places of flourishing.

What will get at the end will get is an earth that is like heaven and heavenly earth. The good will be retained and enhanced and that which is toxic and wicked will be purged from the planet.

You're included in that plan.

We're told that those who yielded their lives to Jesus, who have placed their faith in him, will be changed - you get a new body.

Paul describes it like this:

"It is the same way for the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies, which die and decay, will be different when they are resurrected, for they will never die. Our bodies disappoint us now [any Amen's to that?😊], but when they are raised, they will be full of glory. They are weak now, but when they are raised, they will be full of power."²

What will happen is that those who do not know Jesus are taken away and do not get to enjoy God's restoration and renewal of the Earth.

But those who do know and love Jesus are left behind are left to enjoy God's renewal of the Earth, His new creation, His fully redeemed planet.

This is God's cosmic redemption project that He will one day complete. And we're included in that.

² 1 Corinthians 15:42 - 43

But of course the question gets raised, what about in the now?

Turn with me to Philippians chapter 1.

We'll read from verse 4:

“In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, *that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*”

It literally translates as “to continue to perfect”.

God is at work *in* you and me *now*, and it's a good work, in terms of character and the kind of person that you are.

And it's ongoing, continuing, work in progress - it has a completion day but there is still work happening.

That's such good news.

God's not going to leave the work incomplete.

Nor is He biding time until His Son returns to complete the salvation project.

That means, even now you can be *different*.

You can be a different kind of person.

You're not stuck with yourself.

You can make progress.

What that also means is we - you and me - have *hope*.

Do you know what hope is about?

Hope carries the idea of an alternative future.

And so many people want that today, even in the church.

There are so many people who look back at their lives with regret.

And they think they're stuck.

Others as we've talked about are such deep disappointments.

And it's like the disappointments have the greatest say over their lives.

But in Christ we have Someone else who has the final say.

You are not stuck. You have hope. The future can be different.

You can experience life change even now.

How does that happen?

So you tell me:

“When you have experienced positive life change, how has that happened?”

For me, the voice of God through Scripture.

It’s like a verse or passage comes to life and like it’s for you on day, at a particular moment.

It may be *a thought* drops into your head.

You know you just doing normal everyday things and out of nowhere and you know you need to respond.

It could be the voice of others.

We have people who bring prophetic words; words of knowledge or wisdom from the Holy Spirit.

It could also be the words of others in conversation.

Like this story (not my own):

One semester in college, I shared a house with three friends. We took turns cooking, and whenever it was my turn, I would open a can of whatever, heat it and dish it out. By contrast, my friends often prepared thoughtful and balanced dinners. When the three saw an unhealthy pattern developing, they sat me down at the kitchen table and told me they didn’t think I was doing my part.

I remember sitting there under their glare and that of the kitchen lights, feeling guilty and defensive. It is still painful as I recall it over thirty years later. But I remain thankful they told me.

Had my friends decided to be nice because, after all, they were hardly perfect roommates in other respects, they would have left me wallowing in my sloth and self-centeredness.

Instead... as a result, I learned to make pretty good spaghetti. ³

³ Mark Galli, *Jesus – Mean & Wild* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 68.

I read this story too where a husband and wife were at picnic with friends. The husband was teasingly moaning about his wife. This went on for a bit then one of the friends at the picnic said, "Don't you ever say anything nice about Barb?"

The husband later said that at that moment felt the sting of embarrassment because he prided himself for at least appearing to be a loving husband. However he realised he had gotten into a bad habit of joking about his wife's flaws and rarely bragging about her many gifts. So he began of changing his talk.

You and I are works in progress.

God is doing a good work in you, and you, and you, and you.

So my final thought is this, why is it some people experience life change and some don't?

Where I'm up to is this: we need to cooperate with the Spirit of God who has begun that work in us.