

**“Taking a Stand”
Judges 15:14 – 17**

So by of introduction this morning, I wonder if you recognise any of the following pictures?

Who recognises this photo?



Tiananmen Square protester in 1989. For those unaware, in 1989 there university students held democracy in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China. I remember seeing the footage when the tanks attempted to go one way around him, and so he would move in front of it. And then when it went the other way, he would do the same.

Do you know his name?

Actually, no one does to this day.

Who's this?



Where's she sitting? At the front of the bus where she refused to give up her seat for a white man.

Her name was Rosa Parks, an African- American woman who live in Montgomery, Alabama in the 1950's.

On December 1st, 1955, Rosa Parks did something she was not supposed to do.

She sat down at the front of the bus on one of the seats reserved for whites. In a community known for its racism this was a dangerous, daring and provocative act.

After she had sat down at the front of the bus for a while, the police came aboard and said, "You know, if you continue to sit there, we're going to have to throw you in jail!"

Rosa Parks replied, "You may do that."

Legend has it that student came to Rosa and asked, "Why did you sit down at the front on the bus that day?"

And she said, "I sat down that day because I was tired."

She did not mean that her feet were tired. She meant that her soul was tired. She had had enough of playing by racist rules."

Closer to home, who are these two guys?



This is John Kirwan with David Kirk shown scoring a try in the 1987 Rugby World Cup Final (was anyone at that game by the way?)

They are both went on to be celebrated All Blacks.

But what did they do two years before this?

Well two years before this they refused to join the scheduled rugby tour of South Africa. When that tour was blocked by court action they were the only

two All Blacks who refused to be part of the rebel Cavaliers tour the following year.

And that was an extremely hard decision for Kirwin and Kirk. When they tell their stories they say they were under all sorts of pressure.

I mean Kirwin stood up among his peers and made the announcement and got all sorts of pushback.

Although rugby wasn't professional they players who went to South Africa were paid good money. When Kirwin said, "No", he then was offered double the initial amount. He said it felt like they were trying to buy his morals.

What transpired was those who went to South Africa were banned for two matches. As result of that David Kirk became captain.

However when the Cavaliers served out their ban, what happened? The bulk of them came straight back into the All Blacks.

And Kirk was treated so poorly.

Many of the players were embittered about his decision. So they shunned him. They shut him out; cut him off.

They wouldn't engage with him, wouldn't make eye contact with him, and this is on the field.

This is David Kirk as captain of the All Blacks, trying to address his team, but being shut out of a team huddle:



So here's my first question, ***what's the connection this morning between our reading and these people we've just talked about?***

Tell the person next to you.

Well, what did they all do?

All of them drew a line in the sand and *took a stand*.
On the street, on a bus and on the sport's field.
And Samson, for all his faults, he does the same.

Now you may find the story of disturbing, and you should.
But remember this: Samson, he's in a war zone.
Israel is under enemy rule – the Philistines.
And for whatever reason the Philistines have opposed and oppressed the people of
God simply because they are God's people.
Not only that but the Philistines have already shown their hand at being cruel and
they served cruel deities.
So he takes a stand!
I mean, if you were in Samson's situation, what would you do?

So my next question:

***“Have you ever had to take a stand?
How did that feel?
Was it difficult, and if so, what was difficult about it?”***

If you feel comfortable, tell the person next to you.

(Does anyone feel comfortable sharing their story this morning *and* can you do so
in an abbreviated way?)

One of things that does come through is that there is a cost involved when people
take a stand.

Some years ago, every year for a couple of years, there was a certain
'parade' happened on Queen St at lunchtime. It's main feature was topless
women on the back of motorcycles. Basically it was a porn parade.
Thousands turned out to ogle and cheer this weird, sexual advertising.
However this crowd also booed, berated and verbally abused a small group
of people at the front the procession.
Why? With signs and banners, the Body Beautiful Coalition were silently
protesting the way pornography demeans and dehumanizes people.

In the communist Soviet Union Christians were repeatedly imprisoned for
their faith in Christ. One story is told of an old woman whose crime was to
host the bishop of the Orthodox Church for a night in Moscow. She was
thrown into prisoner but slept little. Every night her interrogators grilled her
for the whereabouts of the bishop.
She replied, "I know, but I won't tell you."

They shook their fists in the old woman's face, and she replied, "There is nothing you can do to me even if you cut me into pieces. After all, you are afraid of your bosses, and you are afraid of each other... but I am not afraid of anything. I would gladly be judged by God right this minute."

There is a place for taking a bold stand in life.

But I also think that at times some Christians take a stand for the right things in such a wrong way.

They get angry, agitated, unnecessarily aggressive and shouty.

They adopt the ways our fallen culture and society rather the way Jesus.

I just wonder if sometimes the stands we need to take today are in the smaller places of life.

You may remember this but I read about a car salesman by the name of Don. The typical idea for a car salesman is to sell each car for the highest price you can, and so sales people are rewarded for identifying and persuading the highest paying customers.

But Don had a different vision: the value of a good vehicle to each and every customer. But he discovered a problem: women and minorities were paying more for their cars than the more negotiation-savvy males.

So Don thought to himself, "This isn't right. This is not good. I need to do something."

What he didn't do was take the streets or make scene at the chamber of commerce or business roundtable.

So Don decided that the best way to approach this was by setting a flat rate on all cars – no negotiating – to effect equal opportunity pricing.

By nature I am or was and sometimes are, timid.

So for me taking stand wasn't about being loud or taking to the streets, it was found in my own backyard.

Coming a non-Christian home it the first stand I took was announcing my decisions to peers and family that I had become a follower of Jesus. That meant for those who didn't understand, I had become "one of them". I remember overhearing one of my friends say, "What's happened to Reece???"

That was followed by the call to take another stand and be water baptised. I'm fairly sure my parents thought it was 'phase' I was going through.

All along the there were these other moments: the first time I prayed out loud in a group (it was terrifying!); the first time I talked with someone about my faith; the first time when I believed I had a word from the church.

In the age of outrage we live in I wonder if we are being called to take a stand in the everyday, the ordinary areas of our lives.

There was a newly ordained pastor who was called pastor church. At this church pressure was placed on this young pastor by one person in particular to wear certain clothing, to dress a certain way, because that's what "everyone" wanted.

It wasn't him but this young pastor caved. He gave in.

But as the following week went on he thought, "Nope, this is stupid. I'm not being myself. This is actually wrong."

So I didn't dress that way again.

What it cost for a time was the ill will of another.

You know, every Biblical character has had, at some stage, had to face drawing a line in the sand to take a stand.

At some point if it hasn't happened already – and will probably be more than once – you will have to make a stand.

To be a follower of Jesus – someone who calls Jesus King – is to take a stand.

It is – there's no escaping it.

And it may cost you – but it's worth it.

Let us be a people who take a stand.

What can happen though us you read something in Scripture or you hear a message, a sermon, and you think, "Oh no."

You know God is speaking to you.

Then all the mental traffic kicks in:

"Don't rock the boat"

"It's not that important"

"Someone else can do it"

"I'm sure it will work itself out"

"I just don't have what it takes to take a stand right now. I don't know if I can count the cost."

But here's the good news for all of us – Samson didn't.

When you read the story, the Spirit of the Lord fell on Samson when he did his mighty deeds.

And Jesus did all he did in the power of the Holy Spirit, and was this same Spirit that Jesus also promised his followers.

When Jesus talked about Holy Spirit He said He would be a teacher, a counsellor, a comforter and He also said that when the Spirit falls on you, you will have power.

Paul talked about being empowered in your inner being through the Holy Spirit.

I don't know what you may be facing this morning.

It may be that God is calling you to make a stand and the thought makes you church up inside.

And if you're honest, you're not up for it, but you know it's right.

If that's you, as we close, receive the enabling, empowering of the Holy Spirit.

And if you would like prayer please come and chat with me afterwards.

Let's pray.