

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2015 : Lent Action

## **Stations on the Way to Freedom (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1944)**

### **Week 3: The Way to Freedom: ACTION**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> week of our Lentern Study takes us to look at :

#### **The Way to Freedom: ACTION**

The inspiration for the course was a poem written in prison in 1944 by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (DB), the German Lutheran pastor and theologian executed by the Nazis for his role in the resistance to Hitler. The poem was called 'Stations on the Way to Freedom' ? still copies at the back??

DB sketched out what he thought was involved in real freedom – discipline, action, suffering and death.

Not quite what we associate with the word – but with these reflections, he takes us into the heart of what it is for someone to be lastingly free.

We are using the poem as a launch pad as we consider What "The Way to Freedom"- is for us today

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#### **Action - Poem –Read**

**Daring to do what is right, not what fancy may tell you,  
Seizing reality boldly, not weighing up chances,  
Freedom's in action alone, not in wavering thought.  
Leave aside anxious delay and go into the storm of our  
history,  
Borne along solely by faith and God's will and  
commandment;  
Freedom, exultant, will welcome your spirit with joy.**

Before all of you who have a natural tendency to the restless legs syndrome – that is to do rather than to be – if you are already thinking about what you are going off to do next ☺ - a word of caution that may not be obvious from the title **ACTION –**

Bonhoeffer starts from the place where Freedom begins:  
Which is from the place of absolute stillness before God !!  
His thesis was grounded in the fundamental need for daily  
meditation on God and the scriptures- in order that God's purpose  
could be revealed- >  
Want to read more- Cost of Discipleship- now Classic

Previous Archbishop of Canterbury- Rowan Williams- stated that

**Rather than a means of escapism, - silent reflection allows  
us to be more receptive to God's activity:**

And before all of you thinkers relax and think you can rest on your  
Laurels –

Bonhoeffer also starts from the place that  
stillness before God allows us to become the vessels of God's  
activity-

truthful people -

empowered, passionate, courageous people....

through which God lives & breathes !

**As DB himself was !!**

So there is no escape from this paradox !!

Last week I had conversation with our hospice matron- who showed  
me piccy's of her recent visit to Sweden to see Northern Lights-

Asked what had led her to decide to go there – she said that it was  
because this is her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday year-so she is compiling a list of 50  
things to do in this year that she has not done before- from – eating  
an oyster to bunghee jumping!!!!

Felt quite envious- having reached my 50<sup>th</sup> year a couple of years  
ago but not having thought of doing anything as exciting-

But I also found myself pondering

**What it is that makes us take certain actions?**

As I may have said before- am a bit of a FB ( social networker) and  
every day get messages asking me to sign petitions – in order to  
reach a certain number which will bring about further action-  
anything from freeing whales, seeking justice- eg Raif Bedawi in  
Iran or supporting particular views or actions.

And, despite my scepticism- it does work!

Of course – social networking is not that difficult to do when in comfort of my own home though it is time consuming – but can make a difference

### **How are we influenced in what Actions we take ? and who or what by?**

*Peer pressure-* eg at School - *Pressure at work-*to go with the flow- even if bit dubious or *because we can-* eg Drive fast – or because we are irritated - Do a bit of tax dodging- cos no one is going to find out- and anyway it doesn't count Recently got 2 car parking tickets at work!!! - Temptation to make excuses!

**As consumers-** You have got to have this- better car- you have got to go to this place on holiday- got to get your children into this school- you have got to vote for this political party- pressure is enormous....

**Does it matter?** - Shakespeare- to thine own self be true as thou cannot then be false to any man -

Yes it does matter – the bottom line is we know- & God knows

- eg Lentern discipline – do we measure success or failure if we go off the rails- or do we say- this is about growth- about changing and developing - so holding up our hands and saying- sorry I messed up- eg I can never achieve giving up chocolate – but I do try and take something else on.

What can we do when we go wrong- search our souls- repent- look for forgiveness-

### **As Christians- are there times when it is difficult to act??**

Why what might be cause? - pause for moment talk to those beside you- what stops you....?

*Not enough Time: Amount of Effort it may take: Fear-* what other people think- what society thinks- could get you into trouble?? – Look at DB!

What we do and don't do- eg some religions demand that their followers have to go out and share their faith in order to achieve salvation-

### **How do we know what Action to take?**

Intriguing passage from Mark's Gospel-(Mark 2 1-11) How did the friends decide to take the Action they did?? Amazing really- would you be willing to make a hole in a roof to get Jesus' attention?

They made their decision -decided worth the risk- took Action

They were not first to do that –

Zaccheus- up the tree : Jairus – daughter was ill /dying

Woman with the haemorrhage of blood / Woman who washed Jesus feet with costly perfume ;

Disciples responding to his call- when they put nets out over the other side of boat

Countless times during Jesus ministry we hear- *people take Action because of who Jesus is*

Four friends clearly knew enough about Jesus to take the action they did:

Wonder- had they seen Jesus in action before- heard about him- seen him perform healings/ heard him teach / miracles

Jesus – through whom God acted -

Jesus seeing their faith...

Their faith brought about Action-

Last Friday- Womens' World Day of Prayer- wonderful celebration from Bahamas- we talked about Faith in Action- can be simple things- doesn't have to be dramatic!!) can be the way we relate- in our relationships – with our family / neighbours – could be a simple loving action – eg cakes- or visiting someone who is ill, eg eg radical faith- radical action-

Everyone should have a paper footprints- invite folk to write what your radical action may be-

Make it Real-Faith in Action-What Action might you take

***Remember-***

**Back to the meditation seeking after God- Benedictine term-**

**Giving God time to speak to us leading us into action – leading us to the cross- leading us to follow Christ to real and true freedom.**