

Jesus who lifts and changes us.

I am often laughed at at home because of the tv programmes I like to watch. Obviously this includes the football (apparently on all the time) as well as natural history-all the usual's. But, I also really enjoy programmes about things with engines. This is a surprise to me as I have no interest in engineering, or how these things work but I really do enjoy programmes like Ice Road Truckers, Outback Truckers, Worlds Deadliest Catch, anything involving canal boats and even the programme about Eddie Stobarts lorries. However, the one to eclipse all of these was a series about a crane company. They have cranes on lorries, cranes that have to be built on site, cranes that cost £m's of pounds and cranes that are so large they can only be moved at night and with a police escort.

You cannot believe the amount of things that need to be in place for a crane to be able to do its job properly. Perfect Terrain, Perfect wind, every working part being perfect. Then of course it needs a driver/operator that is at the peak of his or her skill levels.

Tell me, what is the purpose of a crane?

Yes to lift and then place the load perfectly and in the right place.

As we think this week about Jesus being lifted into heaven we could think of God and Jesus as being the perfect Crane Drivers. God had placed his son Jesus into the perfect place at the perfect time to live a perfect life. Throughout his life Jesus lifted all sorts of people out of their imperfect lives and gave them the chance of a better life. How many can we name?

The woman at the well, blind Bartimeus, the man at the pool, the 10 lepers, all of his disciples, Zaccheus and my personal favourite the woman who reached out to touch the hem of his garment.

This got me to thinking Is mine a Perfect Life? I don't mean in terms of material happiness, family, job. You could say looking around this congregation that we have everything. None of us is poor-not in the truest sense, we may have health issues but we have medical care readily available. We can have nice

holidays, clothes etc. No what I mean is, have you placed your life closely enough to God?

For many we are consumed by or we even drown into the so called perfect life that I have just described. And in doing so we have actually moved away from God and instead worship god called "stuff".

When Jesus was lifted into Heaven, it was because his job on earth was done-for the moment. Have you even started your job for God? Or does God need to lift you from your imperfect life and place you exactly where he needs you. Is he trying to do that right now but.....but.....but?

"I need you to speak to your neighbour for me" Yes Lord....BUT!

"I need you in Church more". Yes Lord....BUT!

"I want to be in your life more" Yes Lord.....BUT!

We don't like change do we? It's scary!

Chorus-

I want to tell you what the Lord has done, what the Lord has done for me  
He lifted me from the miry clay, oh! What a happy day  
I want to tell you what the Lord can do what the Lord can do for you  
He can take your life as He did mine and make it anew

The Comedy Duo Cannon & Ball came to faith some years ago now. The story of Bobby Ball is a perfect example of being lifted from an imperfect life and having his life changed.

At the height of their success they were constantly on tour earning Millions. Bobby spent his money on "stuff" like Rolls Royce's, houses, women (although he was married) drink and gambling. One week they were playing the Alhambra Theatre in Bradford. Every day the local minister would pop in as part of his ministry to see if there was anything he could do for any of the folk working in the theatre. He asked Bobby if there was anything that he needed. He replied " I've got £m's in the bank, I have a Rolls Royce, houses-what could possibly have for me. The ministers simply replied-" I have everything". " Bobby laughed at him, but something changed and the next day when asked

again if there was anything the minister could do for him. Bobby replied “ I want what you’ve got” and they knelt together and Bobby was saved.

So, in our second reading from Acts Jesus again appears to his disciples, tells them that they will be his witnesses and then just when its getting interesting he leaves them to it. What a change for them. After following Jesus, he was no longer there for them-or so they probably thought. They has been part of this perfect life of following Jesus, being there when he lifted people from their imperfections to a better life. They saw how Jesus had changed lives.

I found it interesting that in both readings the disciples’ reaction was not necessarily one of witnesses.

Luke-they went back joyfully-and stayed continually at the temple worshipping him. They kept this to themselves. A bit like us this morning, in our comfort zone here in church.

Acts-two men in white appeared to them and said to them “why do you stand here looking into the sky?” In other words-“get on with it!” (I can imagine the disciples just sitting in silence wondering what on earth to do next).

If the vicar in Bradford had kept the life changing qualities of knowing God to himself, who knows where Bobby Ball would be now.

And yet the disciples had been told exactly what they needed to empower them to witness, to lift folk from an imperfect life into a better life of walking with Jesus, to change imperfect lives into a life of service to God.

“And you will receive power-when the Holy Spirit comes upon you”

This Holy Spirit that we remember at Pentecost next week-well maybe we need to remember what the power of the Holy Spirit can do for us a bit more often.

When you allow the Holy Spirit-God, Jesus, to come into your life-fully, then you are empowered. Empowered to be lifted from your imperfect life into a life that is closer to God-therefore more perfect. It empowers you to allow

change in your life. And it gives you the tools you need to witness to others. And you will be my witnesses.

My friends change is coming. We need to change as a congregation or we will never see this building full, our village is changing, soon there will be many more folk who need to be lifted from their imperfect lives, to change. Are we ready for change? Are you ready to change? Are you ready to be lifted by Jesus to a life nearer to him?

Change sometimes hurts, it's scary, but if we allow the Holy Spirit to come into our lives then we can have everything.

How do you get this Holy Spirit to come into your life-and how do you know it. You cant see it, or smell it. You only have to ask. "God please fill me with your holy spirit-now". If you mean it, you'll feel the difference, the change that will come into your life. I remember that day I knelt at the age of 7 and asked Jesus to come into my life-only 7 but I knew there was something different.

Do you have everything. Ipad, iphone, cash, car, house, credit cards, passport, nespesso machine!-all the "stuff" that gives us a perfect life. Jesus had none of these-but he had everything.

Do you crave all of this "stuff"? Or do you want EVERYTHING?

Are you ready to allow God to lift you from your imperfect life

Are you ready for the change that the Holy Spirit will make to your life

"He can take your life as he did mine, and make it anew!"

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me  
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me  
Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me  
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.