

## 11<sup>th</sup> February 2018 – Beatitudes (4) – ‘Courageous’ BCP

Last of 4 weeks on Beatitudes – after the introduction at our first cafe church last month, we’ve thought about 3 Cs – Contemplative, Compassionate and now our last theme: ‘Courageous’

Chance to ask ourselves the question – what does it mean for us to be courageous as Christians, and also what mean for us as a church – where are we being called to have courage?

Pick up on 3 beatitudes (in red) – READ – why these?

Righteousness could also be translated **justice** – which puts our hunger for it into bigger perspective. Bishop Steven comments:

*‘To be hungry and thirsty for righteousness means even more than longing for personal forgiveness and personal righteousness with God (though it is that). This is social righteousness, justice. The church is called to long for and work for fairness, equality, the ending of oppression and care for the earth.’*

And that takes courage – challenging vested interests, speaking truth to power. People who seek these things tend to get into trouble. Think of suffragettes (major theme currently), how many went to prison again and again.

**Peacemakers** – again, this is a saying that applies at lots of levels – bringing peace in our families or between feuding friends. Bringing peace into our community. And then big-scale stuff, peace in our world.

Peacemaking is costly – means being in middle, sometimes being seen as an enemy by both sides who resent the fact that you won't completely agree with them, that you can see the other person's point of view. Also a bigger perspective – shalom in Hebrew is a big word. Bishop Steven again:

*'Peace, or shalom, is more than the absence of conflict. Shalom means wholeness and well-being and fulfilment and reconciliation.'* In other words, it requires justice, and the prospect of future change and growth. Set in that context, what would shalom mean for us, our church and for our community?

Last is probably the most obvious – clearly it takes courage to live in contexts where to be a Christian automatically puts you in danger. **But what about us?** Question that often challenges me is: if in so many countries being a Christian lands you in prison, why am I so scared to make a small stand for my faith, which costs me nothing more than a funny look or a bit of ridicule? What is it that holds me back and how can I overcome it?

Simple reflections on courage:

It is overcoming fear, not fearlessness – e.g. thrillseekers – not true courage. To be afraid and to push on through, that takes courage.

Courage is something we do together – e.g. army; Jesus sent disciples out in 2s. We are more courageous when we commit to something together. Some of the Go4th teams – surprised ourselves

Courage needs a cause – we are more courageous when we have a deep passion for something. What is it that fires us?

Courage trusts that, one way or another, everything will be alright – not same as success, but sense that a higher power at work in control – that’s why Christians so often have courage – more at play than just their own actions

As I close – minute or two of quiet, reflect on these questions:

- Where is God calling us as a church to be courageous?
- Where is God calling you to be more courageous?

