

What has God been saying? Share any particular words of encouragement

Destroying the Bronze Serpent- Pete Greig

2Kings 18v4-6.

Hezekiah kept the commands of God but destroyed the snake, made by 6 centuries earlier (Nu 21v9). Desperate Israelites were encouraged to look up at the snake for healing. The snake is a symbol for pharmacy and the World Health Organisation. Jesus' death is compared to the snake on the stick: look and live Jn 3v14.

Hezekiah was 25 years old when he destroyed the snake and kept Moses' other commandments. The significance is that he breaks with the past. It's easy to worship the past. Even what God has said in the past can be a distraction to what he is saying now. An icon can become an idol. It can be easy to worship the old and familiar -even Emmaus is not immune to idolising dead religion. (Stories of youth pastor not being allowed to change the hymn books, and church discouraged from baptism on the beach as it was in a different parish).

CH Spurgeon quote reminding us that all aspects of Christian experience can become idolatry and we should simply worship God where heaven is his throne and earth his footstool.

God's name is I AM - we can only meet him in the present tense. Need open hearts. God commanded the making of the snake and then it's destruction. What new thing is God doing today? Do we miss it because it is unfamiliar or offensive?

Are we trading off yesterday's obedience, adventure and revelation? John 3v8 - the wind of the Spirit blows where it pleases. **Have we got the posture: "You're Lord and I'm not, I'll say yes to anything"?** Eric Liddell refused to run on Sunday for Olympic heats but 20 years later agreed to referee a Sunday hockey game in prison as he brought peace to a tense situation.

How are we to live? Being available to the God of the I AM

Renew our commitment - we're people who live differently and prophecy into the community, being radically led by the Holy Spirit. We saw in Acts prophetic interruption (Peter Acts 10, Paul Acts 16).

Emmaus is a community led by the Spirit. Rom 8v14 (Msg) *get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go!* We need to be continually open to the Spirit. Return to holiness of heart.

The challenge is this: are there idols I need to break? **Do I worship Christianity not Christ? Am I in bondage to a devotional routine? Do I worship my career? Or my money? Am I less generous to others than God is to me? Do I worship romance or Christian fellowship or friendship? What will we sacrifice?**

God is doing a new thing in the nation, the church and in each of us. Are we putting personal preference before peace with God? Hezekiah was looking for the true presence of God. He Stopped, Changed and Started again. Liddell's last words before he died in prison (1945) "Complete surrender."

Rom 12v1 *I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.*

Communion is 3 things: Remember, Redemption, Resurrection.

Open yourselves to God - he wants to move you toward the person he wants you to be. Live dangerously for God by complete sacrifice to him. He is the I AM.

- Pete posed a number of questions (see above)
- Alternatively, ask what is good and bad about our Christian heritage? What helps? What hinders?
- How can we encourage each other to live more radically? What does that look like?
- What if we couldn't meet on a Sunday? Perhaps the shake up to our worship times on a Sunday morning is a challenge to us to consider what is an idol?
- Do we substitute our private worship and devotion for worship on Sundays?