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The Great Manifesto

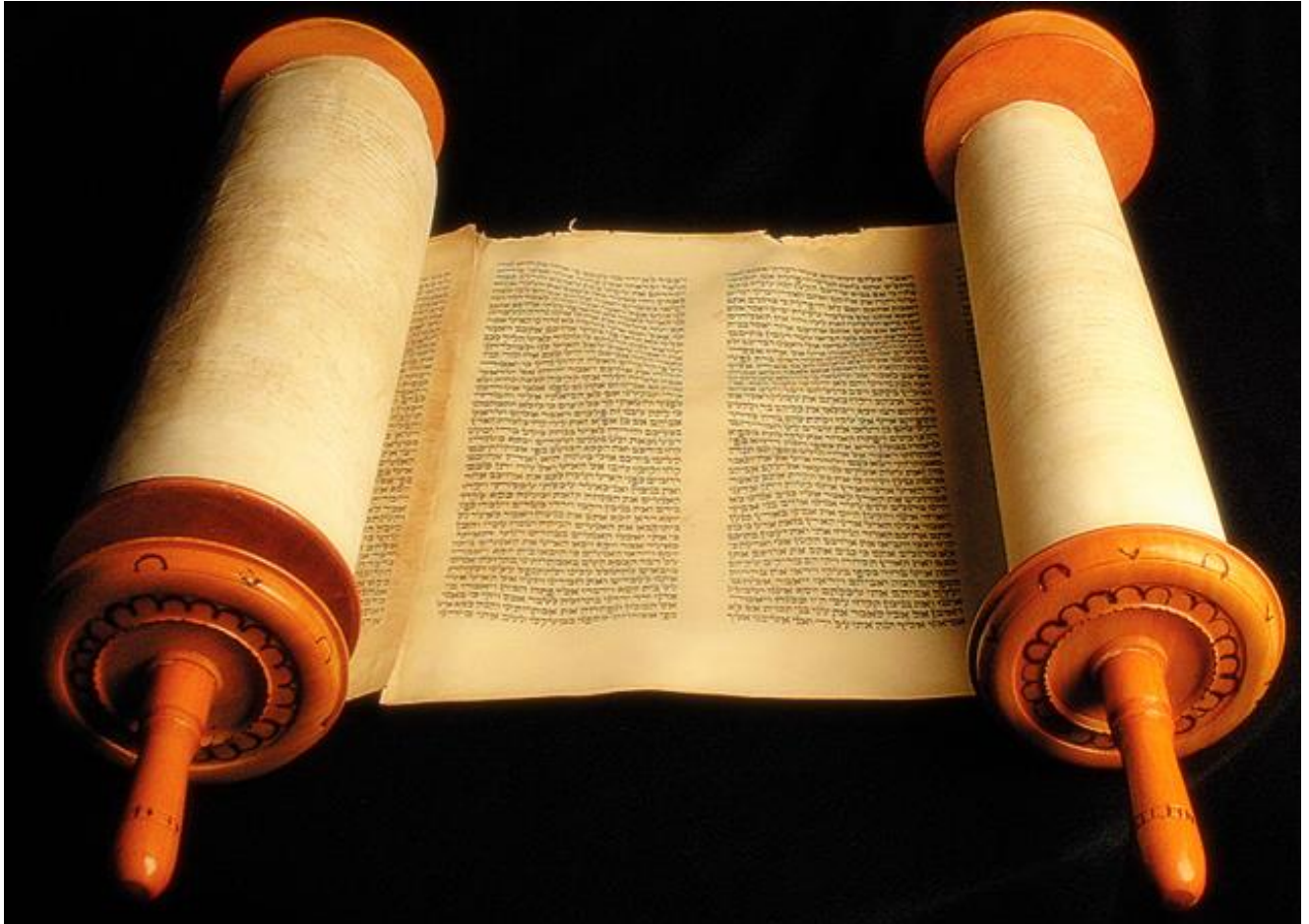


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Chapter One

The Great Manifesto



Study passage **Luke 4:18 – 19**

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” (The year of Jubilee)

We will be using these verses as the foundational text for our fall/winter series this year.

We will be considering the following study points.

- Things lost they need to be found again
- Things stolenthey need to be recovered.
- Things broken they need to be repaired.
- Things abandoned they need to be repossessed.
- Things defaced they need to be restored

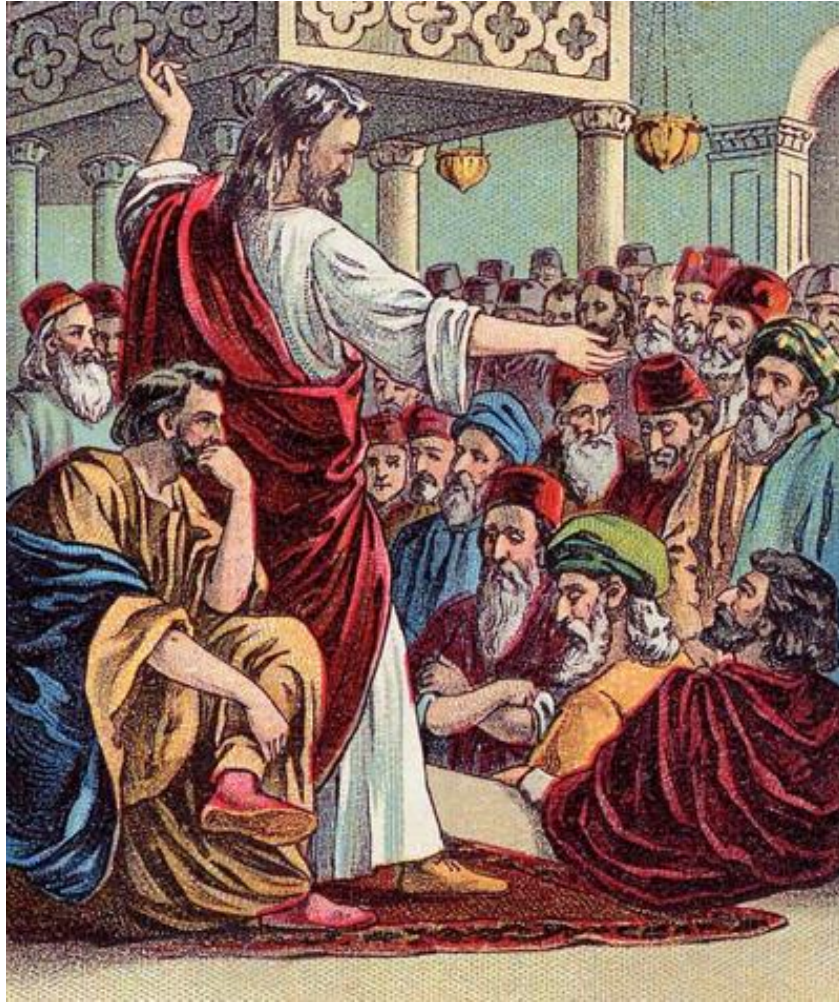
This all may seem like a mournful list, but, take heart, for as we have seen in this opening manifesto, Jesus has come to put things right: permanently right.

This work of teaching and action upon earth showed how Jesus went about the mission that He proclaimed in **Luke Chapter 4**. In His numerous parables, lost things were being found and stolen things reclaimed. In His actions, broken things were repaired, hope was given to the abandoned, defaced people (lepers and maimed) were given health and dignity, and everybody was given worth and a sense of eternal purpose.

So, our course opens with **Luke 4:18 – 19** and the phrase: “*The acceptable year of the Lord.*” This term is found in **Isaiah 61** from which Jesus quoted almost word for word. As we turn there we will see that there was a lot more said of which the **Luke 4** manifesto was just a prelude. How many times had this passage been read in the synagogues of Israel? How many times quoted by the rabbis? But this time when quoted by Jesus he added the astonishing words: “*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*” After that all hell broke loose. We will not go into the details of the incident but two things we will need to understand:

- 1) “*The acceptable year of the Lord.*” This term was known by all to be THE YEAR OF JUBILEE. That glad occasion that came to Israel of old once in every fifty years. It is described for us in **Leviticus 25** and is worth our attention as we later pursue this study.
- 2) “*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*” Putting all dispensational teaching aside it is of immense importance that each individual believer enters his own day of jubilee. It is there that we

will enjoy all the freedom, abundance, blessing and divine appointment that God has intended for us to enjoy TODAY of “*This Day*” as referred to by Jesus. This is the very heart of divine intention. Praise God.



So, this is the starting point for our course and, somewhere in it's unfolding, it will also be our finishing point: one circle of glorious truth.

As part of our discussion we will not turn to Leviticus 25 and list some of the blessings promised by God to His people in the acceptable year.

Then look at Isaiah 61 and read specific things that are promised by Christ to His own people in the dispensation of His grace.

Chapter Two

The Poor



As we have seen in our statement in **Luke chapter 4**, it begins with these words:

“He has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor.”

Notice that Jesus is addressing the less well off sector of the community, did not get into the reasons why the poor were poor. That was not His mission to enquire into the individual situations that people were found in: whether the poor were bereft because of misfortune or mismanagement of their wealth, or by self induced problems, or by circumstances beyond their control, or by any one of a multitude of reasons. Sufficient to say that they were poor and that they needed hope to believe that things would get better.

Even so, we too begin with good news and with the hope that after our meeting together things will also be a lot better.

As we have already seen, Jesus speaks in principles and broad terms. He does not give specifics but infers that the poor will be the people that are most receptive to His message of love, acceptance and forgiveness. That, in itself, is worthy of our consideration. Why did/do the poor constitute the first audience of Christ? It is a question logically answered.



Firstly, the poor have suffered rejection from mainstream society. They have nothing material to contribute into the commonwealth of the community. Therefore, they have been squeezed to the verges of society because they have been perceived as the non-productive section, who are ever receiving and rarely giving. So, the poor welcome the invitation to be included into the Kingdom of God.

Secondly, since they have so few of the goods of this world they are more open to full citizenship in the world to come. This hope is central to the good news of Christ's message, so people whose wealth has been shattered are front row in the audience of Jesus. BUT, we must remember that though people may be poor, it does not mean they should stay that way! If Christ said, "*I am come to give abundant life and cause men and women to thrive*" then our financial life must be included in this experience of wholeness.

In our Western world finances pay a HUGE part in peoples lives, both in their daily functioning in their sense of well being and happiness. What Jesus gives in the wide-angle lens, Paul and others take up in detail their epistles.

Here, money is seen to be a major part of our stewardship from the Lord; how it is obtained, how it is spent and how it is distributed. The parables of **Luke 16** bear this out and we will, read them together.

As far as church-life (God's Family) is concerned, the standard is:

“Let those who have surplus be generous in their giving to them that lack, in order that no one go without basic necessities in the Family of God.”

So, money needs to be giving judiciously to meet needs as we see them. Before anybody can give he needs to have the resources in order to be able to give. In the letters of the apostles a direct connection is made between employment and provision.

People may be poor because:

- 1) They have no work to do. They are unemployed.
- 2) They are poor because they CANNOT work. They are disabled.
- 3) They are poor because they WILL NOT work. They are indolent.

These are three separate and distinct states. In the first instance, when recession hits the economy and jobs simply are not available even for those who seek for work, financial crisis will never be far away. Recently a man I know had to downsize his firm, sell his trucks and put his cottage on the market to meet his obligations. Why? Because recession had hit the oil industry and hundreds of workers had been laid off. However, in all these difficult times, we must remember that the definition of hardship is measured by the biblical paradigm of: *“having food and raiment therewith to be content.”*

Was God really expecting us, living in all the affluence of Canada, to be satisfied with honest work and the simple necessities of life? Clearly, He was since the Word of God is applicable to all times and to every culture. It can also be added that if we are reduced to the bare necessities of life we are free to pursue heavenly things without the burdens of worry and surplus riches.

Chapter Three



The second category of the poor are those who CANNOT work.

For want of a better word we call such people disabled. Here in our modern society such people are served by welfare at every level. There are disability pensions and payouts to relieve the plight of the handicapped. A century ago, this was not the case. In Victorian England for example, there was no disability pension. Those who were injured in military service were given some annual assistance, among this group were the veterans called the Chelsea pensioners, but of the general public there was nothing.

Charity might come in the form of the “Poor Houses” where the indigent and the handicapped would be given some form of shelter and minimum assistance. If the poor were unable to support their family, the children were sent to orphanages and foster homes to be raised and educated at someone else’s expense. In our own fellowship, we express concern for needy children by supporting orphans in India. Today, welfare has

become institutionalized and is largely run by the state, but in a local church help comes in many and varied ways.

The third category of the poor is set apart from the other two where their penniless state is the result of their own idleness. They are shiftless and lazy.

Should such individuals receive help from the local church body? Let Paul answer this question. *“If any man will not work, neither shall he eat.”*

That is the short answer to a big question. The discerning leaders of a church will soon decide which category the poor among them fall into and respond accordingly. Those who have brought poverty upon themselves through substance abuse, addiction and booze are called upon to repent of their sin and live according to the standard of the gospel as every other believer must. If they refuse to then the Word of God is very succinct when in **1 Corinthians 6** it says: *“Drunkards, revellers, wine-bibbers and gluttons have no part in the Kingdom of God.”* How long we bear with such people varies on the standards held from church to church and have ever been a subject of warm debate.

We have included a list that some people consider may be classified as necessary to maintain a minimum standard of living here in Canada. We are bound to diverge in our opinions as we discuss this list so be kind and gracious to each other as we do.

Now, as a separate but related subject, prosperity for the believer. We see that if the gospel message is received by the poor, it brings, by its very own latent power, material prosperity and such blessing can produce a problem of a different sort.

John Wesley, William Booth and other revivalist preachers observed that when their converts received Christ and entered into local church life and lived according to the standard, they prospered. By the second generation, they were living free from poverty and some were doing well; so well that

if they were in business they became too busy to attend church, and may even be looking after their shops on Sunday morning when other Christians were in worship. In other words, prosperity had its own pernicious effect.

This also is a subject worth some serious discussion and for the believing parents among us, may also be a serious concern as to how to keep our children focussed on Kingdom things.



Chapter Four

“I have come to heal the broken hearted.”



This is what we call a “banner statement” from Christ.

It is a classic declaration that could be made only by someone who had the ultimate power of the Creator to accomplish such an impossible end.

We know that our medical profession has many different branches of the healing arts: physicians who are skilled in their practice, surgeons who operate on the human body, opticians and audiologists for eyes and ears, cosmetic surgeons who can reconstruct faces and bodies. But who among them can claim to be able to heal a broken heart?

If we think about the condition of a broken heart it encompasses many other forms of brokenness; for the heart is the deepest core of the human

being. The broken heart is the gravest of all human conditions. From it proceed broken emotions, broken memories, broken relationships, broken dreams, broken hopes and so on.

Just recently I met a lady and her husband for an appointment. Almost immediately, she opened up her caches of grudges, grievances, personal perceptions and disappointments. After listening for about fifty minutes, I asked if I could say something, she was unaware that nearly an hour had passed. I told her that I was not proficient as a counsellor, I did, however, employ the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I then told her that God has spoken to me and told me that her problem was a broken heart. She was visibly affected, with tears coming to her eyes. Before she could speak again I went on to say these words, “You can either find solace for your troubled mind by discharging your heart to people like me OR you can put the whole mess of disappointments and injuries into the hands of Jesus and let Him take care of it in His very own way.” Her reaction to this told me that she considered the latter solution to be too simple for she began the second installment of her story!

Nevertheless, we must ask ourselves the question was the cure that I offered the REAL answer? Could Jesus really fix her if she surrendered the whole bag of barbed memories, seared emotions and broken trust to Him? I believe that the answer is a resounding “YES” and the reason is simple.



It is only our Creator with His most intimate knowledge of our lives from our earliest moments, and with His infinite tenderness and concern for our highest good, that could ever do the impossible and heal our broken heart.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus tells of a man that gets beaten up on the highway to Jericho. He is left broken and bleeding to death. But having being ignored and left to his fate by the priest and Levite, the Samaritan comes along and rescues him.

This narrative could easily be transposed to our present day and to our own society, for all of Jesus' teachings are ageless and applicable to every culture. Massive amounts of people, often through no fault of their own, are set upon by thieves as they proceed on this risky journey called life. Through a multitude of hideous and unforeseen circumstances they find themselves knocked off their feet and left battered by the curb side. Divorce, bankruptcy, loss of health, abortion, betrayal by friends, desertion, broken promises, removal from ministry, grief and loss of every type lurk like thieves on this road of life. Nor can people get back to their feet to limp onwards.

It takes "Another" with the greater resources of care, courage, love and forgiveness to enter upon their scene and TAKE CHARGE.

In the case of the Good Samaritan, he did several things worth pointing out.

- 1) He saw.
- 2) He stopped.
- 3) He got down from his beast.
- 4) He had compassion.
- 5) He poured oil and wine on the wounds and bound up his injuries.
- 6) He brought him to the security of the inn.
- 7) He gave instructions for the man's care.
- 8) He paid the bill.
- 9) He promised to come again and settle the account.

No wonder the Good Samaritan is the clearest type of the Lord Jesus in His person and ministry to broken people. And, since Gentiles and Jew are found in the mixed blood of the Samaritan, every person who lives on earth is represented here.

For the purpose of our study we will concentrate on two things:

- 1) The immediate tri-age of oil and wine that were used to treat the wounds of the patient.
- 2) The aftercare that was given at the inn by the innkeeper and his staff.

I don't think that it stretches the point to say that the wine of Jesus blood is the ultimate cleanser of people's wounded hearts and that His love is the only balm that can address the deepest groaning of a man or woman's soul. The desperate condition of humanity is universal, as I have found in travelling the world, but so also is the universal hospital of the local church whether it be found in Africa, India, Indonesia, Mexico and in hundreds of other nations.

The balm of the love of God in Christ and His millions of local road side inns and millions of inn keepers around the world is His practical answer to the broken hearted. As we proceed, we will be looking at the role of the church as the inn and the inn keeper of the damaged earthly traveller and how both are involved in the healing of the broken hearted.



As part of our closing dialogue for this chapter, let us honestly discuss some of the blows in life that we may have experienced. How did these take place and how has the church in its mission helped in the process of our recovery? How also are we now functioning with our road side church to help others gain their feet and continue in their earthly journey.

Chapter Five

“I have come to heal the broken hearted”



We began this course by sketching out the conditions of mankind as seen by His Creator in the opening manifesto of Christ in **Luke chapter 4**. Let us remind ourselves what they were.

Things that are lost and that need to be found again.

Things that are broken and need to be repaired.

Things that are stolen and need to be redeemed or returned.

Things that are spoiled and need to be restored.

All of these painful and chronic conditions (the result of man's original fall) are referred to in Christ's parables and are reflected in His ministry of healing and miracles. Indeed, it was His works of power that authenticated His teaching. His final one was His own death and

resurrection. In the parable of the Good Samaritan two things are immediately clear.

- 1) The man was robbed by thieves.
- 2) He was beaten to the point of death.

In this sorry state, he was brought to the inn and put in the care of the inn keeper. Who were these thieves and what were the blows that were dealt to this unfortunate traveller? We have already seen what caused the damage in the previous chapter.

Despite the comedy put on by Hollywood in “Mrs. Doubtfire” (Robin Williams the chief actor did not find life funny when he committed suicide) and the divorced couple who continued to live as friends, divorce is a terrible thing. It is a traumatic event for all concerned. Nobody escapes scot-free in a divorce. Everybody pays something and with divorce figures at 20% of the population there are a lot of hurting and damaged people both in and out of the church.

Bankruptcy and total loss of wealth will also bring permanent scars to people, especially those who, having enjoyed a good standard of living, have to sell all and live in rented accommodation or a trailer somewhere. I have seen this happen numerous times and heard bitter and woeful stories about what ‘could have been, should have been, would have been’ but with the real outcome of someone beaten up on the Jericho Road.

Accidents and loss of health are also mega-blows of life. Something happens “out of the blue”: a person is left paralyzed, immobilized, slowly losing life and joy. A calamity like this can lead to deep mourning and real thoughts of suicide. What can damage the body can also deeply affect a person’s heart and emotions when betrayal or desertion take place. Listen to the cry of this broken heart in Houseman’s poem.

“High heaven and earth ail from prime foundation.
All things to rend the heart are here and all are vain.
Horror, pride, scorn and indignation.

O why did I awake? When shall I sleep again?”

This verse could well have been penned by anyone who has been beaten up on the highway of life and who then wonders whether there is any hope left. It is at this very point that the Gospel Cure, the Remedy of Jesus Christ takes over.

Central to the message of the gospel is the cross of Christ which brings healing and redemption at the deepest level. It is a remedy that can only be found in the church.

Think of these things that come to us through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

Forgiveness

Hope

New life after death

Redemption

Cleansing

Acceptance and worth within the new family of God



To someone in the third stage of brokenness being able themselves to forgive is the gateway to their future. When people say that they cannot forgive their brother, their sister, their mother, their father, their boss, their ad-infinity, what they are really saying is that “I won’t forgive.” But with the hospital of the church the message is CONSISTENTLY the same in God’s word and INSISTENTLY the same by the Spirit. All true healing for the internal calamity of sin begins here. Our own forgiveness from God and our forgiveness to those who have injured us. This of course is at the heart of the Lord’s prayer.

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that have trespassed against us.”

When we face the grim facts of how life has brutalized us, we need to picture and NAME people who we see as responsible and forgive them by NAME. Immediately we will feel the oil and the wine begin to flow and as we move in forgiveness it will continue to flow.

I mentioned earlier about those who are in the third stage of brokenness. As I have observed people I have noticed that some are in further degrees of hurt than others. Once I was in a garage in America getting my car fixed. On the wall in bold letters was a chart. It read something like this:

To all our customers, here is a rough guide as to what your bill will be

Clink, clink!	\$20.00
Chh, chh, chh!	\$20 – 40.00
Scrape, scrape!	\$100.00
Clang, clang!	\$500.00
Thud, thud with smoke!	\$1000.00 upward or new engine

Most of the “Clink, clicks” are easily fixed but the deep thuds of the broken heart have to be brought to the Maker Himself. The church is indeed a hospital where rehabilitation takes place at every level.

Chapter 6



Central to the healing process, and symbolic of it, are the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's supper. Both these sacraments speak of renewal at the "Thud, Thud" level.

Baptism is a picture of death, burial and resurrection unfolded for us in **Romans chapters six and seven**. We will turn to these chapters as we continue this study.

The Lord's Supper of Communion speaks of the suffering, the crucifixion and the broken heart of Jesus. It is this suffering that Paul says in **Philippians** that "*He longs to share.*" It is out from our understanding and embrace of the cross and from our identification with the Lord Jesus Christ that we find full renewal of life. This gives us the power to forgive others as Christ has also forgiven us.

Here we need to read the parable of the Great King in **Matthew**.

Blows of life are common to all men. Not one of us shall escape them if we live out the full span of our earthly days. Job poetically expresses the experience when he says "*Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.*"

Below we will look at some off the troubles that are epidemic in our society and indeed throughout the world. The list is not exhaustive and we will doubtless be able to add a few of our own.

- 1) Divorce and the reasons leading to it.
- 2) Financial loss or bankruptcy
- 3) Death of a loved one.
- 4) Betrayal by a trusted friend.
- 5) Addiction that overpowers the will and mind.
- 6) Loss of health or catastrophic accident.



In this discussion part of the session feel free to talk about events on this list that you may have experienced in your own life. In what ways, have you needed the oil and wine of the Good Samaritan applied to your own heart?

In closing out this chapter, it may be that some of the events that we refer to were problems of our own making. There is always plenty of blame to go around when we begin to identify the “Thieves” that maraud this earthly journey but when we see that we may have invited an ambush by our own actions then we need to be honest and confess it to be so.

Chapter Seven

“The recovering of sight to the blind.”



Chief among the ailments that we have afflicted mankind from “prime foundation” is the condition of ignorance. The very first command in the scripture in the **Book of Genesis**: it is to a BLIND CREATION. Where God says “*Let there be light!*” and as He speaks, immediately creation sees.

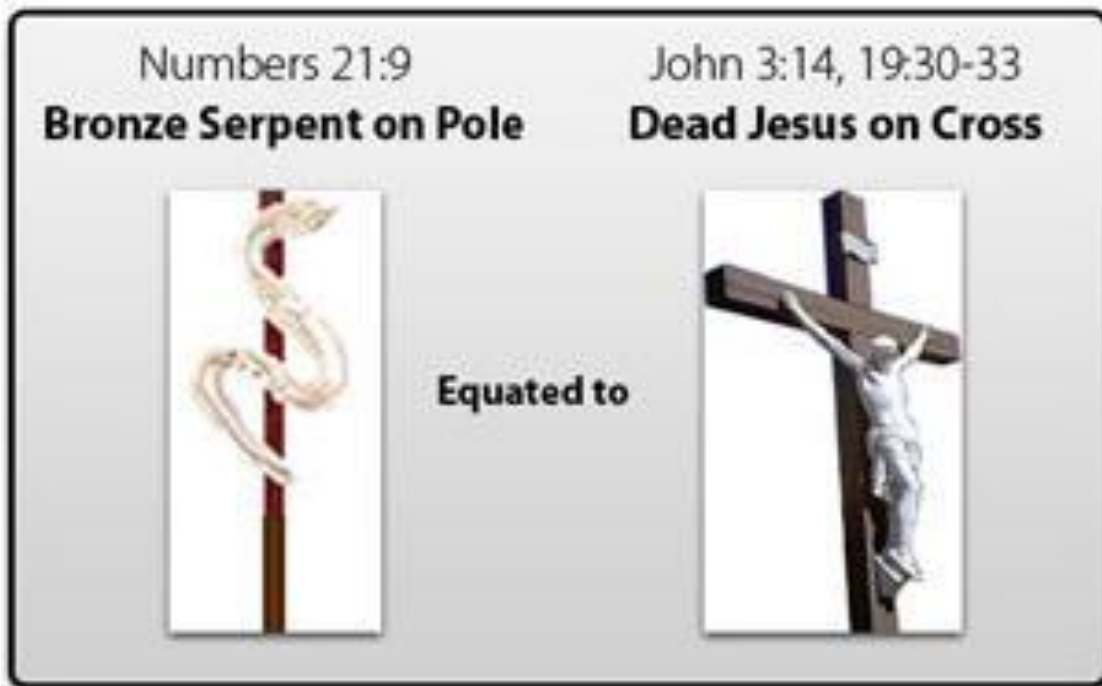
It has ever been a fundamental principle that God, who is light, brings light and commands light to His creation. This is especially so for men and women.

When I visited Yale University, I saw inscribed over the main arch way the Latin words “FIAT LUX” which in translation means “Let there be light”. John’s gospel begins with the Lord addressing the condition of darkness in men’s soul. (**John 1: 2 – 6**) Consider the verse “*Light shineth*

in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.” This is an amazing statement, one that is parallel to **Genesis chapter one** where darkness was upon the face of the deep and where God commanded His light to shine. But in the case of the physical creation the darkness did not have to comprehend the light, it gave way in the face of it.

However, with mankind it is a different story. In **John’s gospel**, we read that the “*darkness comprehended it not.*” When darkness does not comprehend the light, we call that state IGNORANCE. Not only so, but with men and women there is also a hostility to the light which makes their ignorance invincible.

John, later in his gospel enlarges on the truth when he says that the natural man HATES the light. All of this unfolds after our favourite verse **John 3:16**.



Verses 17 – 21 reads:

“For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not

condemned, but he that be God. And this thee condemnation, that the light is come into the world and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doth evil hates the light neither cometh to the light lest his deeds be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God."

In this context "Light" and "Truth", are interchangeable words. So, the summary for the passage could read "Men do not like to hear the truth, in fact they hate the truth because the truth convicts them of their sin. So, they prefer to live in darkness which is their natural and comfortable environment."

Nevertheless, a major part of the mandate of Christ to His church is to bring recovery of sight to the blind, and that is a toilsome business.

Helen Keller, who lived her life both blind and deaf, said after her transcendent experience of being able to communicate with others from her dark silent world:

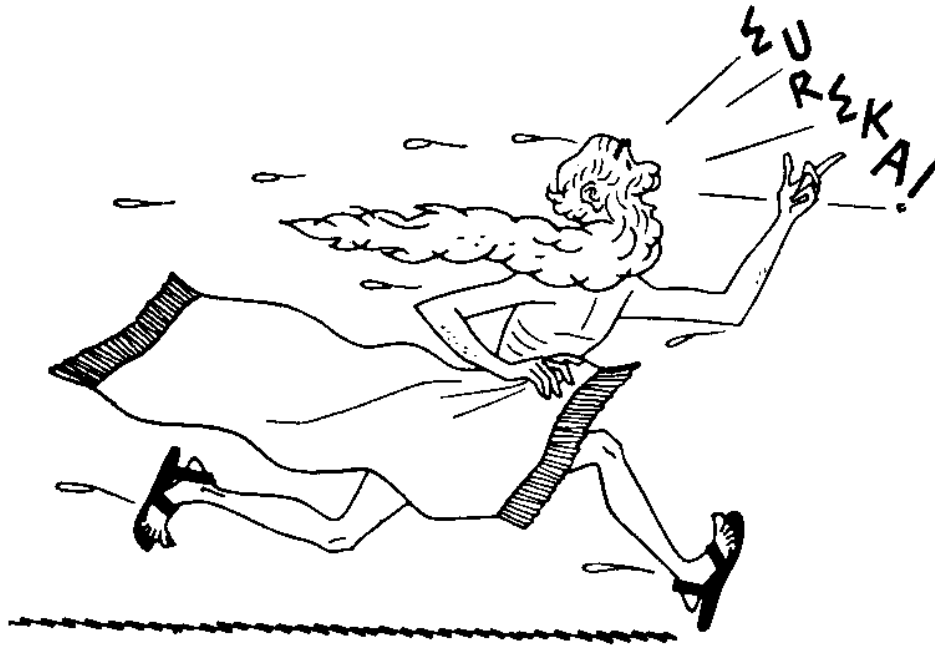
"Although I am blind and deaf, I see more clearly and understand more fully than many who have eyes and ears that work."

She was speaking, of course, of ENLIGHTENMENT. To bring about seeing to darkened eyes is the very first requirement of all education. Paul speaking to the **Ephesians** says in **chapter one**:

"I pray that the EYES of your understanding be ENLIGHTENED that you may KNOW etc..."

For more than fifty years I have been a teacher, preacher and communicator in word and letter and I can confidently say that it is here that I meet my greatest frustration and my greatest fulfillment. Frustration when I teach the most basic and simple things on the spiritual curriculum and receive only blank stares. Fulfillment when, through spoken or written messages, God speaks and says "*Let there be light*" and there is

comprehension in the mind that is REFLECTED in the eyes. (And that reflection is important.) At that moment, we have what is called a EUREKA experience. The same as the one of Archimedes when he jumped out of his bath and naked in the street having understood the theory of the displacement of water.



Peter has a EUREKA moment when Jesus asked: “*Who do men say that I am?*” Well some said this and some said that but Peter suddenly declared: “*Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God.*” Jesus immediately responded: “*Blessed are you Simon because FLESH and BLOOD hath not revealed this unto you but My Father which is in Heaven.*” Peter’s eyes had been enlightened and ONLY GOD COULD HAVE DONE IT says Jesus.

So, flesh and blood teaching goes on at every level but in spiritual matters God’s breath must breathe upon the words of the teacher, preacher or writer for the recovering of sight to take place. The breakdown of this and the unfolding of the mystery of revelation, is given to us in the parable of the sower and the seed. It is a parable given in three of the gospels.

Matthew’s reads:

“Behold a sower went forth to sow. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some seeds fell upon stony places, where they had not much depth of earth: and forthwith they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns’ and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty-fold and some thirty-fold. Who hath ears to hear let him hear.”

At first this business of spreading the message of the gospel appears to be a chance affair with seeds bouncing about here and there. But it isn’t. Divine power is being displayed and also the working of the human mind is being divulged in the process.

Seeds come to the wayside to shallow ground, to congested ground and finally, to the good ground. Thus, recovery of sight either takes place or blindness within people’s hearts is intensified. But one way or another God’s will is being accomplished and either way God will be glorified. The outcomes are all of God. To those who receive the word of God, further and further illumination. To those who wilfully reject, a condition is developed within the proud heart where God actually causes further blindness and it can be a terminal state of affairs.

So, illumination by the preaching and teaching of the Word and revelation by the Holy Spirit are at the very heart of the opening manifesto of Jesus Christ. This is the task that was immediately transferred to the church when Jesus gave his final words to the disciples: *“Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”*

Chapter Eight

“To set a liberty them that are bruised.”



Why should those who are bruised be mentioned in a separate category to everybody else? It is called the “bruised” category.

They are not classified as “broken-hearted,” but they are still in the special needs section of the manifesto, the need being special help and grace from God. They are in a form of captivity and need to be set at liberty. What is this ‘liberty’ all about and what is this ‘bruising’?

In my own observation of living things, bruising is a form of marring or disfigurement. This morning I opened a basket of peaches. They were all perfect part from one that was bruised and the mark on it could be seen immediately. It was less than the other peaches in the basket, and it stood out.

We have all seen pictures of people who have been in an accident. If it was severe it left them with bruised bodies and disfigured faces. If a boxer has had a true battle in the ring, his lips are puffed, his eyes are swollen and a tooth or two may be missing. He may look plain ugly. Ugliness is to do with image and IMAGE is critical to the equation of life for a human being.

Animals have absolutely no image problem. My daughter's dog, Bo, is not hung up about how he looks, yet he is an unattractive beast with shaggy eyebrows, bent sticking out teeth and odd sprouts of different coloured hair. But he is happy and loved and couldn't care less about how he looks.

But human beings are not so. IMAGE was the very first order of business when the Lord God created mankind. In the planning session between the God head (which is a story in itself) God said "*Let us make man in our OWN IMAGE.*" Immediately after we read "*in the image of God, male and female created He them.*"

Image is the all-important factor that distinguishes mankind from all lesser creation. Man has the stamp of the Creator upon him. It follows, therefore, that if the devil, who is a liar, a thief and a murderer from the beginning, was to attack God's creation he would do so through an assault of God's image in man. What the devil cannot do to God Himself, he does by an assault on the image of God. Even to this day in England it is an offence to deface a coin of the realm since it bears the image of the queen. In men and women, whoever they may be, there is still a reflection and a residue of the likeness of God. This is the TULIP doctrine where the letter 'T' stands for "total depravity."

What is not generally understood is that all conduct, good or bad, stems from how a man relates to his own image. If a man sees himself as chivalrous and noble, he will act accordingly. If a man sees himself as a regular gangster, he will act accordingly.

Teenagers often see themselves as ugly because they compare themselves with the photographs of the magazine models. They look perfect because the computer enhancements have removed every blemish and left them with creamy peachy skin. These young people consider any pimple or less than perfect feature as a great shortcoming and suffer untold torments because they fear they are not matching up to the expectations of friends.

In fact, such deep fears and inadequacies lead, in the West, to the second greatest cause of early death, suicide. Listen to the words of this teenager. The quote is from a recent article in the English press dealing with a spate of teenage suicides.

“Everywhere you look it’s celebrities; thin, blonde, perfect teeth, perfect skin, perfect eyes, perfect eyebrows. I feel as though I should look like that even though I know it is all fake. It makes people feel ugly, worthless and miserable.”

Much of drug use and alcohol consumption among young people is in order to turn down the volume on these voices that speak lies about their self image.

It all comes down to image and self esteem and, yes, they need to be set free.

The bruising of people’s image and inner man can begin early in life. I remember on one of my first trips to Toronto, being invited to the home of friends who lived in the west end. We were in the back garden and I remarked on a long split in a maple tree that looked otherwise healthy. I asked if lightning has struck the tree in a storm. My friend, Tom, said: “No. A cat scratched it twenty years ago, when it was still a sapling.”

The first image makers are a child’s parents followed closely by siblings. Later as social circles widen there are friends and, in school, the authority figures of teachers. During this period, there are different, personal selected heroes and strong social groups that can help shape a teenager’s image for good or bad. But the One who ultimately decides image and identity is our Creator and Maker. Unless we are in right relationship with Him, we are always living in deficit with our image. Only He can set at liberty them that are bruised.

This setting at liberty of the bruised became a source of study and wonderment for a cosmetic surgeon who dealt with badly burned patients; soldiers who had been disfigured in the Vietnam War. Some with terrible

facial injuries went into complete withdrawal on return from the battlefield. Some were depressed, others were hostage to feelings of self hatred and rejection. Some committed suicide.

This surgeon along with his skin graft team performed wonders of facial reconstruction. When the bandages were removed, many patients went through psychological transformation and regained confidence and joy in life.

He wrote a book called: “Psycho-cybernetics. The restoration of Hope Through Cosmetic Surgery.”

Notice that these injuries were not life threatening. They threatened and robbed people of joy and life-purpose. We must, in turn, ask ourselves some questions if we are to minister in the cosmetics department of the church hospital.

What are the things that destroy the image of God in people and what does it take to set them at liberty from their bruising? We must also be honest with ourselves and if we are bruised in some way take steps to get our own cosmetic surgery.



Before we begin the next chapter, which will be titled the restored image, let us discuss together some of the ‘softer’ blows of life that can inflict life long damager to a person’s sense of well being. When we do this, I think of some of the methods that interrogators use that inflict huge pain but leave scarcely a mark on their subjects. Think of that. No visible mark but great internal bleeding. Sounds terrible but it happens.

Chapter Nine

“To set at liberty them that are bruised.”



The work of destruction continues in many different ways and through some surprising agents. For example, a child that is raised in negativity absorbs messages of incompetence, unworthiness, guilt and shame FROM ITS OWN PARENTS. The very people who brought the child into the world are now doing the work of disabling their child for the journey ahead.

It seems inconceivable that loving, well meaning, parents would drive home the message that their child is stupid, wicked, bad, unwanted or a Dodo brain but that is what happens continually. Is it any wonder that children often wish they were someone else or belonged to another family where expectations were lower and where everybody seems to be just one happy bunch? Over achieving super-parents, seeking to see their OWN

IMAGE in over achieving wonder children are doing great harm to their offspring.

At school, teachers and students alike can be part of the moulding of a poor self image' a sense of self that has been bruised by bullying, name calling and incessant teasing about a physical defect that compounds the problem.

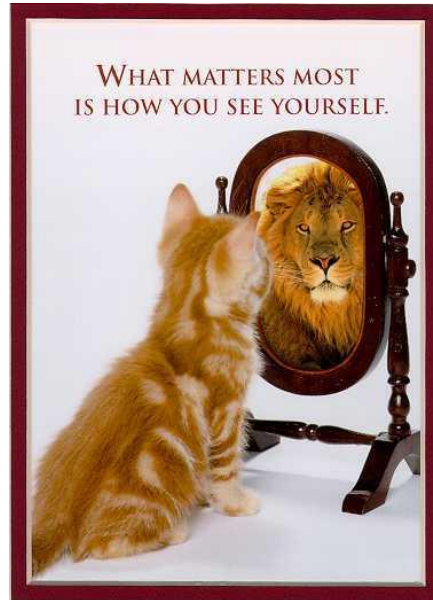


Image and identity are closely connected to an estimate of one's worth. Teaching that dismisses people as no more than a worm is nowhere found in the Bible. In fact, the opposite is true. This value of the SINGLE individual features in numerous parables of Jesus.

Parables need to be pondered, for often their meaning are not immediately apparent. In this regard two parables in **Matthew 13** come to mind. In **verses 44 – 46** we are given the story of the rich merchant man. One finds hidden treasure in a field and buys the whole field. The other finds a pearl of immense value and sells everything he has to buy that one pearl.

Obviously, the treasure and the pearl cannot refer to Christ Himself since we, as sinners, were bereft of any wealth to make any sort of purchase of any sort of value. The Pearl of Great price and the hidden treasure represents each individual soul that was redeemed by His precious blood

on Calvary. When the truth and reality of this dawns upon us we are immediately set free from whatever bruising our image may have suffered. We are transformed by an overwhelming sense of gratitude. In a word “we are set at liberty.” As in all things we know the truth, and it is TRUTH that always sets people free from the lie they might have embraced about themselves.

Now in all these things our life in the church and in fellowship with each other is critical to our personal freedom. In the **second epistle to the Corinthians**, Paul takes up this question of image. The true image of Christ. The image that is being restored and renewed in each believer. Lost in the Fall of Adam it is now being given back to us.



Chapter 3:6

“Nevertheless, when the heart shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. But we all, with open face, beholding as in glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Here we see transformation that brings its own LIBERTY within the forum of the church assembled. The word we must note here is “we all”. It is in the context of fellowship with the Lord and with His people that His glory is seen in each other and that our image is changed. No problem with a defaced image here, for we are looking for the Christ in each other. This transformation also continues into the **next chapter as we read verses 4 to 6**. The theme again is one of image: the image of Christ revealed in our hearts and revealed to our hearts and revealed through our hearts.

“For God who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness hath shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God in the Face of JESUS CHRIST.” In the previous chapter, it is the open face of each other, and in this chapter, it is the face of Christ revealed in our hearts.

The inward work of the Spirit revealing Christ within our hearts transforms our hearts into his image. Looking into a mirror to see our own image is a futile business. Seeing ourselves NEVER satisfies ourselves. Seeing our own image will never change our own image. That is why James says in his epistle; “Having looked in the mirror we immediately forget what we look like and have to look again,” Not only that but obsessive looking only increases the defects that we see and we can make our house a ‘house of mirrors’ such as we see at the fair.

No. The mirror that we look into is HIS glass, the one spoken by Paul in **2 Corinthians 3**. The OUTWARD reflection of ‘WE ALL’ and the one spoken of in the following chapter the INWARD reflection of Christ revealed by His Spirit.

Both are part of a wonderfully liberating process that sets at liberty them that are bruised.



Chapter Ten

“The opening of the prison house to them that are bound. To preach deliverance to the captives....:



That is quite a statement! **In Isaiah 61** the phrase reads “*The opening of the prison house to them that are bound.*” In Luke, the ‘bound’ are referred to as ‘captives’. Whether ‘bound’ or ‘captive’ both need deliverance and deliverance is at the heart of the gospel message. Deliverance is in the original manifest. Deliverance was among the first of Christ’s recorded miracles. Deliverance is the first priority. In the great commission in **Mark 16** where we read; “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature and these signs shall follow them that believe, they shall cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues,* etc.”

If we dismiss devils as irrelevant to the mission of the church we become part of the general deception that has descended upon the church in the twentieth century, namely that demons are no more than anachronisms of the middle ages. Back then, they were called evil spirits and demons but in our enlightened times we call them phobias and psychological conditions, states of dissonance and the like.

Really?

Then if this be the case, Satan himself is no more than a fictional figure. But the truth of the matter can always and MUST always, be found in the Bible. Here Jesus, the Master of the Spirit world names Satan as the prince of all deceptions.

The first order of business therefore, is to cast out evil spirits and deliver human beings from their influences and oppression. When we accept biblical definitions and paradigms we begin to understand that all addictions are demonic strong holds. As in Bible days there are still millions held in the grip of evil addictions in both mind and body. In our day chief of these among men is pornography.

Pornography is an addiction of the mind and imagination that has reached epidemic proportions in our internet ruled society where messages of the most lurid nature are but a click away.

Of almost equal proportion is the plague of obesity rooted in appetites that have been given over to gluttony.

They are the maximum-security prisons that have incarcerated millions behind their doors. In the parable, Jesus taught in **Luke 11**, “*The strong man guards his goods in his stronghold.*” The goods of the human being no longer belong to him because they have been hijacked and the devil now considers them to be his own. The talents and faculties of the host are no longer under his control and he is in urgent need of being released and set free.

This state of affairs is true, for everywhere and on all sides, we see money, talent, resources and potential being extravagantly squandered because people are held captive by powers greater than themselves.

Now One stronger must come, overpower the thief and then open the door of the prison house.



Another major prison house of the human spirit is fear. Fear is a maximum-security institution. It plays havoc in all manner of ways and comes in a myriad of different forms. Fears, phobias, fantasies, only God knows the nightmares that people live out in their daily lives. Events THAT NEVER TOOK PLACE AND EVENTS THAT WILL NEVER TAKE PLACE scenarios that exist only in the realm of IMAGINATION keep men and women in a jail house of their own making.

Such phobias have no actual substance to them, but are as strong as steel bars and iron shackles when entertained in the human mind. For liberty and deliverance to come the keys of faith and trust in God's word must be applied.

Pilgrim's Progress is a marvellous allegory of what a believer encounters in his earthly journey. At one point Pilgrim and his friend are in a cell locked up by a monster called Giant Despair. The outcome is certain death until Christian finds the hidden key of FAITH. When he uses this key the door of the prison swings open and he and Great heart, his friend, walk out into freedom and sunshine. They have been delivered from their bondage to continue their journey to the celestial city.

Remember fears are only as strong as we allow them to be and everything that God has planned for us is on the FAR SIDE of fear. Fears vanish when a believer takes hold of the promises of God. He then walks into the freedom wherewith Christ has set us free. Hallelujah.



Let's end this session with a discussion about common snares that can entrap our mind. Everyday events from fears of not being able to pay bills to unfounded fears about the state of our health and so on. As we are in dialogue, be honest about your own battles which have been fought and won (or are still being fought). Your honest will help your brothers and sisters win the day.

Chapter Eleven

“To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”



The conclusion of the St. Luke Manifesto is a joyful one.

Jesus quotes **Isaiah** when He says *“I have come to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”*

The year of Jubilee has come and, it is worth noting that when Jesus began to preach the liberty, joy and restoration of the year of Jubilee the good town’s people of Nazareth rose up and tried to kill Him. The devil was obviously upset and he continued to be upset for every succeeding day of Jesus’ earthly ministry.

Change, both rapid and radical, occurs when God arrives on the scene, and this is what Jesus was stating in His opening manifesto “I AM HERE”.

The blind see a new perspective.

The broken hearted are healed a new hope.

The poor are included, they are suddenly in the front row seats instead of
at the back a new status.

Th bound are set free from prison A new freedom.

The depressed are lifted up new garments of praise.

And so on!

The summation is spelled out for us in **Isaiah Chapter 61**.

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach the good tidings to the meek’ he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison house to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God to and to comfort all who mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, and to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called the trees of righteousness the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.”

Joy is the keynote and joy is at the heart of the Christian experience.

All these promises in the manifesto we see played out in the Gospel accounts and later in the Book of Acts.

Bartimaeus is given new sight great joy.

Philip preaches in Samaria there is joy in the city.

The Beggar is healed at the Gate Beautiful joy and loud praise.

Lazarus is raised from the dead absolute awe and wonder and joy
from his family and friends.

Everywhere there is transformation and change. Sinners repent and angels rejoice! Rejoicing in heaven and in earth. Instant joy and transformation.

But let me give you a word of moderation. The idea is abroad in some of our churches that the poor will no longer remain poor, but having received the gospel will be instantly made wealthy. As a consequence of their new-found wealth they will be also overflowing with joy! There is a convoluted thinking that brings the touch of magic into the pure message that we preach.

As we read the scripture from **Isaiah** we see that it is far more important that we become oaks of righteousness (solid and unshakeable in our faith and characters) than people who follow Christ for material gain. Not people whose garment of praise is a \$1000.00 Gucci suit. But will the poor remain poor if they receive the Gospel?

The promise is clear that those who seek first the Kingdom of God will have all their necessities taken care of. Our needs will be met but not our greeds. We may not have an abundance of this world's goods as we pursue the Kingdom first, but that is O.K. Listen to what Paul said to the believers at Corinth.

“Being poor but making many rich.” And that should be our focus, that we might through our faith and example make many rich spiritually. Meantime the truth of the gospel abounds in every way.

We have spent some time emphasizing the difference between a joy that comes from an ever deepening, ever increasing relationship with Jesus and the modern fabrication that joy and happiness come from an ever-expanding bank account.

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit and is always twinned with peace. Both are the bi-products of a love relationship with the One who declared the Great Manifesto and who fulfilled it in Himself. Everything is fulfilled in Christ, both in a plural and singular experience. And everyone who trusts

in Him and lives the obedient life will be fulfilled in Him. Let's face it, if you had been in a prison house and were set free by the King Himself, you would be thankful.

If you had been broken-hearted and were healed by the Great Physician you would give full acknowledgement to your healer.

If you were bruised, beaten and broken down with guilt and self hatred and you were allowed to look in a cosmetic surgeon's mirror and see you new beautiful self you would be ecstatic over the One who make you a new creature.

If you had been imprisoned in the dark night of your soul and suddenly your dungeon "flamed with light" you would should "Eureka."

And if you had accumulated an impossible debt of sin and you were forgiven by God you would give full allegiance to the One who had shown you such mercy.

That is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the GREAT MANIFESTO. The declaration that rolls down through the centuries and across the broad earth, that reaches to us here in Barrie and is as true today as when first pronounced. We, His redeemed community, are overjoyed that we are bona fide members of that company He calls his church. Now, as His people, let us joyfully declare the good news to others, of this day is the scripture fulfilled in us.