

Connected

Speaker: Ben Whitnall

Date: Sunday 30th July

Talk title: Together in humility

Bible verses: Philippians 2.1-11

What are the main points (no more than three!)?

- the realm of God is coming, and our 'job' is to make ready to be **as at home in it as possible**
- that means learning to identify key differences between the 'now' world and the 'new' world – and one of THE BIGGEST ones, as touched on in this passage, is the **way of exploitation vs the way of service**
- this proceeds from a fundamental difference in outlook ('there's not enough & I have to look out for me' vs 'there is more than enough and we seek the blessing of the whole community'), which plays out in 100 different but related ways. One of our callings as church is to be a space to **practice living in the new and different way, modelled and made possible by Jesus** ('your attitude should be like that of Christ Jesus...')

Questions to prompt conversation...

- what did you make of the idea of the kingdom of heaven being a transformation of this world, for which we should be practicing and getting ready to be at home in? Is that new to you or very familiar (or just not interesting enough to notice either way!)?

Understanding the 'now'

- Ben tried to make a short summary of the 'way of exploitation' – saying it all stemmed from the twinned views, that 'a) there's not enough and b) I have to be the biggest and best'. Does this outlook seem familiar to you? /do you recognise what that's getting at?
- Ben said he could have listed '15 more pages' of different ways that this 'way of exploitation' works out in practice – from people using power to protect themselves and disadvantage others, to everyone being treated as rivals and everything treated as a competition. What sort of behaviours or character traits would you list as hallmarks/typical of the 'way of exploitation'?
- Where do you see that way in your life, or the world as we find it today? Remember, this could be anything from individuals shopping for toilet rolls to international economic policies to the behaviour of billionaires...

Understanding the 'new'

- Same 3 questions but for 'the way of service'!
- Ben talked about the 'way of service' that Jesus models and makes possible, as described in Philippians 2 – that 'being in very nature God (having all the power possible), he did not consider equality with God something to be exploited' – choosing a path of 'emptying himself' in order to bring freedom, forgiveness and life to all. Do you agree with/recognise this characterisation of Jesus' life, death and resurrection?
- What sort of behaviours or character traits would you list as hallmarks/typical of the 'way of service'? How are they contrasted with/opposite to 'the way of exploitation'?
- Where do you see that way in your life, or the world as we find it today? Remember, this could be anything from Jonny washing dishes at Hill House to large-scale efforts to sustainably provide security for vulnerable people, reducing precarity, to a move to an entirely different socio-economic system

Church as training ground

- How can we as church support each other to practice this way of service/Jesus/Philippians 2 *now* and become ever more at home in God's coming world?