

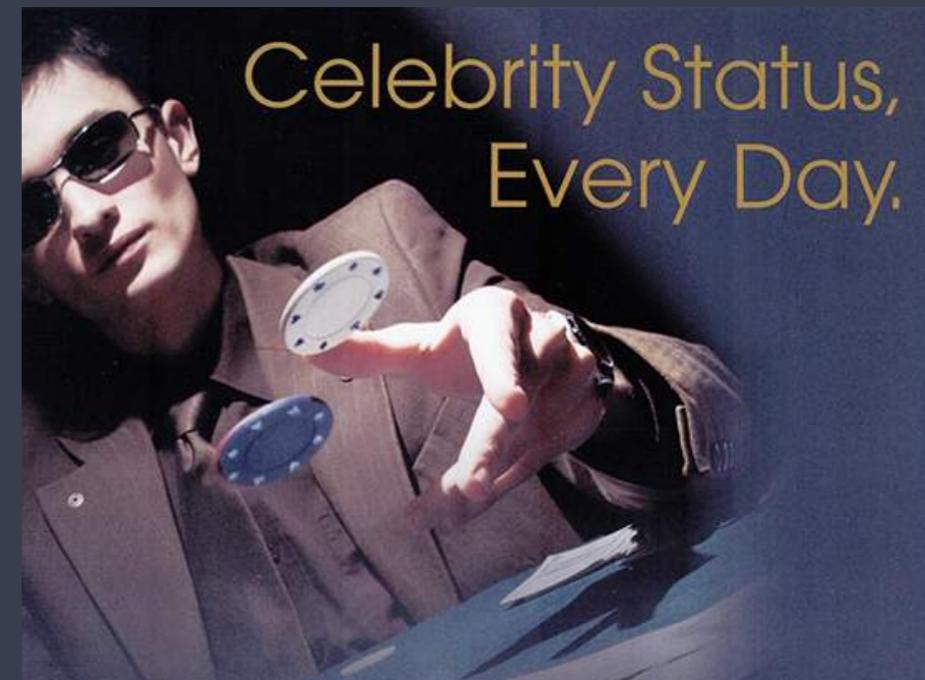
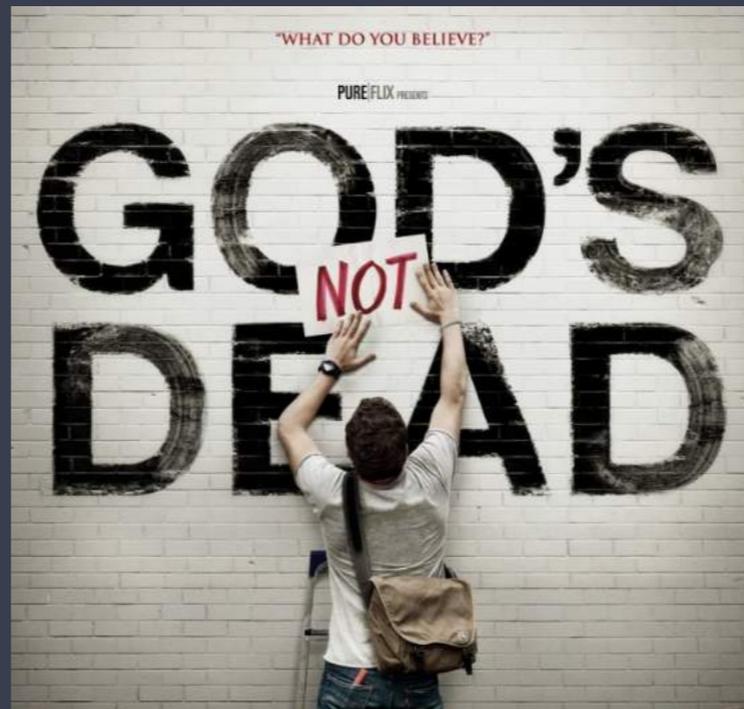
27 June 2021

WHO DO WE PROCLAIM?

(To praise or glorify openly)

Jesus told the crowds, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:15-20)

Lord, lead us to the truth.



We are proclaiming the story of God's saving grace in our lives when we:

- Invite others to church and to our prayer meetings, where Christ is proclaimed
- Witness to our faith through song and worship
- Offer encouragement to a friend and others who are ill or in need
- Show Christ through our daily lives and work, which express thanks to God and care for the common good
- Talk about our faith in our homes and with others

How will we know if we truly are proclaiming Jesus in God's power rather than by our own efforts?

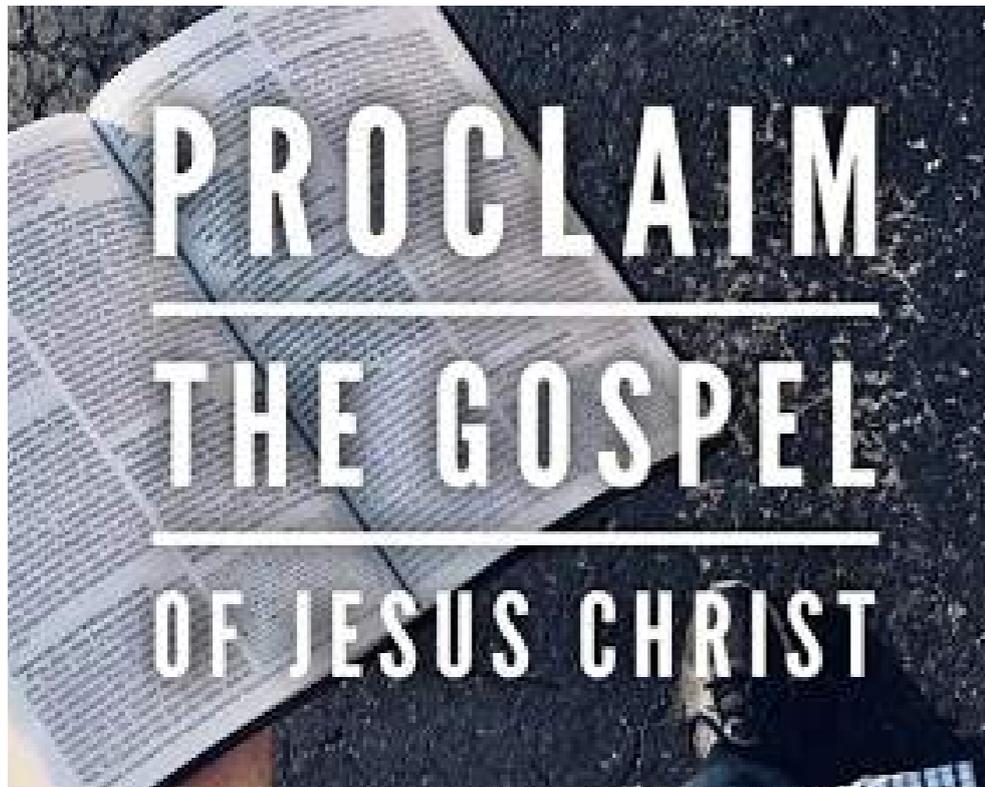
The end result will be that when people see our good deeds, they will glorify God. It will be about Him, not us.

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven"
(Matthew 5:16).

Perhaps we have never needed the warning about false prophets as much as we do today, when the internet and social media so often presents us with many untruths. We can judge false prophets by the result of their words. The many scam alerts! If their words result in peace and love, we can believe them. If the result in hate, greed and criticism, we need to receive them with caution. Popular messages appeal though they may not be true to the Gospel. Some predict doom and gloom, while others present a more liberal agenda. Genuine prophets teach the authentic way of Christ, but many false teachers in the human story proclaim their own message. We are reminded to be alert and attentive so that we can reflect and discern what is true. A tree does not go bad overnight. Rather, decay tends to begin from within and it takes time before it becomes evident. Outward appearances may be good but loss of fruitfulness is observed. Or we lose direction, when something small creeps in and begins to take us off course. On the other hand, growth in goodness is evident. We have the potential for good and the Lord desires we develop it. By our fruits others will know us. What does it mean to proclaim the good news of God in Christ? As the Church, acting together and as individuals, we all have a story to tell. We have the story of God's movement in our lives. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is not simply a story in the Bible. Rather it's the story of our lives and the story of what brings us life. We simply share with others how God is working in our lives. We share the story that shapes our lives and makes us who we are today.

But, the question remains - How?

How do ordinary people like us proclaim something so glorious? It is like putting precious jewels in a clay jar to display them. Remember that it isn't about us and what we do. We are not the ones who change lives. We are not the ones who move people from darkness into light. Only God's power can do that (See John 1:9-13). Realise then that God purposefully wants to use ordinary people. We need to get out of the way and let God work through us. In the process, people will see that salvation truly is a work of God (See 1 Corinthians 1:18-31). Rest in His all-surpassing power as we proclaim Jesus. What might seem impossible to us becomes possible because His power surpasses anything and anyone. That same power that saves people enables us to get beyond our fears, people's doubts and questions, and any opposition we might face. Even in the face of pressures, perplexities, persecution, and put-downs, Paul continued to proclaim Jesus. How? Because of God's all-surpassing power, he was not crushed, in despair, abandoned or destroyed. God wants to reflect His light through us. No matter who we are, what training we have received, or any other circumstances, the bottom line is that it takes His power for that to happen.

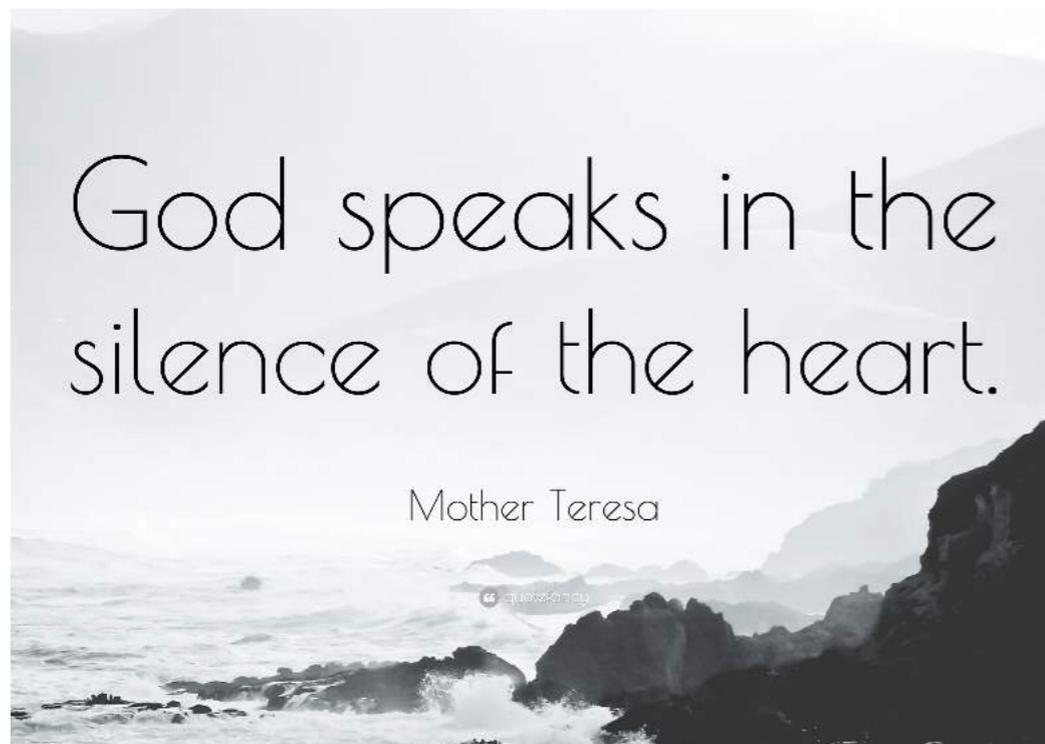


Let's take a cursory glance of a day in our lives. When we first open our eyes and wake up. What is the first thing we do? Who is the first person we address? How did we begin our day? Intentionally or pretentiously? The first thing we dwell upon and the last thing we cling on to, most probably for many, would be checking the messages on what's app or reading emails from the office, some would be checking the stock market or 4D results.

Who do we proclaim? The early Christians of Antioch spoke of Jesus constantly and shared what Jesus had done for them. When Barnabas arrived in Antioch to check out the church, he saw the grace of God. Many of the believers there shared their conversion stories and they enjoy talking about the love of Christ. They proclaimed His gospel message to the people around them. And most of all, they truly loved one another and shared their belongings with those who need.

Who do we listen to? False prophets of advertisers who promise that long awaited weight loss, that porcelain complexion, that dream home, if you buy their products. Or do we listen to some false teachings of Christian doctrine and false prophecy because we are looking for sensational news. The world and the media have indoctrinated many to a false sense of hope, to the novelties and frivolities of life and when things get stagnant or static without any excitement or novelty, someone would come along and spin a tale or two and then we fall into the trap of the prosperity gospel and not the gospel of the beatitudes. Fame, glory, get rich quick, get rid of pain and suffering, anything to numb the sufferings and losing patience and hope. Who shouts the louder, that is the voice many tend to follow.

Have we forgotten the story of Elijah, that God was not in the loud wind or the earthquake or the fire, but God was found in the sheer silence. The sound of silence can be a deafening and frightening experience. We are left with no other sounds but our own inner voice and inner 'demons'. And that's why some of us are afraid to go on silent retreats, because we discover who we really are before God, a loved sinner.



FAITH SHARING

When we proclaim the gospel, stay focused on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Share what Christ has done for us. Talk about His love and mercy, instead of gossiping about other people. We have lost the simple method of faith sharing. Everyday there are stories we can share about God and about our daily experiences of reflecting on scripture and how we sense the movement of God's spirit in our lives.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because the Lord has anointed Me to preach to the poor; He sent Me . . . to proclaim liberty to the captives . . . Instead of your shame you shall have double honour . . . The Lord will cause righteousness . . . to spring forth before all the nations." (Isaiah 61:1-11)

"And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah"
(Acts 5:43).

Contemplative Musing:-

1. If today would be my last day, what would I be grateful for that God has done for me and who can I proclaim God's goodness to?
2. In the last 24 hours, whose voice did I listen to most? And what were the last words I heard before I went to bed?
3. Following social media trends, was I caught up by any 'loud' advertisement? What was the message in the advertisement that caught my attention?
4. Did I hear God's voice this past week? Where? When? How did I respond?

