

Sunday July 25<sup>th</sup> 2010. 10.30am

## **BOB x30: Building at ground level. PP1.**

**READ: 1 Corinthians 1: 18 – 31 and also Mark 12: 37.**

### **PP2.**

- The foundation is laid: Jesus Christ and the teaching of the early church, faithful teaching today.
- The building is visible (not just the building) – a reality perceived in the community of Bow as well as a Kingdom presence in many places of work and the like.
- The living stones (people) relate to one another in community – Sunday in the Round (SITR), pastoral care and projects.

There are many encouragements to engage with the world and its powers – the church to some extent can have a civic function put that is far from it's primary purpose. We are to challenge the powers rather than seeking to be a part of the powers. In many senses the church needs to be involved at "ground level" – grass roots and incarnational people like Jesus. Outreach: new people need to be built in constantly.

### **PP3. 1 Corinthians 1: 26.**

- God has chosen to use: *the weak and foolish things of this world to confound the wisdom of the wise.*
- The early Disciples of Jesus were fishers, tax collectors and prostitutes in the main. (Skilled workers but also despised people who were thought to be traitors of Israel or immoral). There were also noble women and wealthy rulers. (*Matthew 21: 31*. The despised (in terms of this world's wisdom) were rushing into the Kingdom. Here was something open to them – and no entrance fee).
- Jesus' Message appealed to ordinary/ common people. *Mark 12: 37*

**Ordinary people: The crowd heard him gladly. TEV Mark 12: 37**

**(AV: The common people heard him. Mark 12: 37.** In Greek – the hoi polloi – the many, the rabble, the vulgar)

**PP4. The Jesus message needs to be accessible** – this has nothing to do with dumbing down the message.

**Last week:** as Geoff said the Message needs to be taken to and spoken to the places where the ordinary/ the bulk of people go. We were asked what is our primary place of outreach and service i.e. where do we live/ work/attend appointments. (This will change at various points in our lives).

If the message is to be accessible then we need to learn to share the Message in ways which are relevant to peoples lives and also to "portray" following Jesus as desirable.

### **PP5. Reflect on where we were when God called us?**

Just becoming a Christian may bring about allsorts of changes in our lives. These changes can take us away from "ground level" relationships with the family and communities we come from – redemption and lift. E.g. the child care worker may train and become a classroom assistant, the classroom assistant may study and

become a teacher and so on. (Never forget your roots! Or *the rock from which you were hewn*).

*1 Corinthians* was written to Christians in a cosmopolitan Greek city: the Greeks idolised “wisdom” and had many philosophers who walked round discussing and deliberating.

God has called – chosen to call according to Paul those who in the world’s eyes are the least successful/ promising. It’s not because the message appeals only to the depressed, *Leon Morris*).

The Greeks revered wisdom but God does not choose on this basis. There were some in the church who were “intellectuals/ academics” but not many. There were some powerful people and some of high social class – but not many! It is not being an academic, having power, or high social class that leads automatically to Salvation. In other places Jesus makes it plain that riches and wealth can act as an obstacle to faith – *Mark 10: 23*)

It is God’s choice to have a bias to the poor – Bishop David Shepherd. (Since in so many ways the world is biased against the poor and powerless).

#### **PP6. The *hoi polloi* – *Mark 12: 37B*.**

The *hoi polloi* (*ho polus ochlos*) hear Jesus eagerly (*hedeos*).

This verse introduces the next section. Context: Jesus warning about the Scribes – teachers of the Law. Lifestyle, clothing, long prayers, corruption – made the message inaccessible to the mass of the ordinary people. They wouldn’t gladly receive their message since it was basically bad news for the poor – a heavy load. Their message preserved the status quo and kept the poor poor.

But something more – the ordinary people received the message gladly because Jesus may be unorthodox (which is unsettling) but Jesus is attacking the powerful – the ruling classes. (*Ched Myers – Binding the strong Man*). *Myer* suggests Jesus demystified their authority – I say simply, he cut them down to size!

#### **PP7. Accessibility – practicalities.**

- Our lifestyles and choices: we need to keep in touch with ordinary people – including the *hoi polloi* i.e. common people as well as the wealthy and successful. Our homes to be places where all feel comfortable. Our work and promotions may lift us out of the realm of the ordinary person and so we have to make changes accordingly.
- Lifestyles feed into our accessible programmes. Unless we live the lifestyle we won’t have anyone to invite to our Art Workshops, Barbeques, Alpha courses, Socials.
- BIBLE must become vulgar (popular). I.e. vulgate in the common language of the people and so understandable: Jerome in 4<sup>th</sup> Century produced popular version. Today the Message needs to be available on DVD, ipod and e books.
- Message accessible but not dumped down (\*over simplified). We must not treat people as stupid but they may not have the benefits and refinements that formal education can bring. (John Humphreys, August 2004 Mac Taggart’s Lecture suggests general dumbing down in Britain: you may or may not agree

with this. We are not to patronise people but still need to make the Message accessible and free of religious jargon.

(\* Dumbing down: Wikipedia suggests the origin of this expression from America during the Slave Trade. The general level of leadership and skill among Negro slaves kept “dumped down” by removing any person who was bright, intelligent and questioning)

- Holy in the hoi polloi: 1 C 1: 2; 30. Like salt, yeast and light in darkness we are to have a distinctive and positive contribution amongst the crowd.

In BOW and in many parts of Britain the rich and the powerful live more or less side by side with the poor and the powerless. You and I in varying degrees make up the crowd – the hoi polloi in the middle. We are called to stay in touch with the ground level and to make the message accessible.

Questions at end of Flame Sheet.

*1 Corinthians 1: 26.* Remember what you were when you first followed Jesus. What attracted you to him? Have you changed? How do you now stand out from the crowd?

What stops ordinary people (the crowd) from responding to the churches invitation? (*Quote Mark 12: 37. The common people heard him. (or more accurately: The crowd heard him gladly).*)

How can we make the Message accessible to people without patronising them or dumbing down God’s message?