

RESOLUTIONS: Part 2

Something to show for it.

RECAP-

We've been thinking about resolutions.

- **This is the season of Self-Improvement**- where everyone is asking "What should I do about me?"
- **But we suggested last week**- there is a better question for this time of year- "What needs to be done around me?"
- **And we said**- if you really want to be a better person- you'd better figure out how to make the world a better place- for someone or something.

So to help you narrow this down- today we're going to ask- **"How do you know what you should do?"**

- **Last week we looked at Nehemiah:** He received some news that made him very emotional- it broke his heart.
- **And we asked you**- 'What breaks your heart?' – because your response to that question will tell you a lot about what you should do.
- **Every day** you hear about a whole host of issues –
- They come up in conversation- in news broadcasts- in something you see in church or down the high street- in something you read.
- And you think- that's terrible- that's awful- that shouldn't happen (surface response).
- But every now and then someone will mention something- and this feeling rises up- this passionate response.
- **You may not be able to change the world**- but you can change at least one person's world- in your street- in your school- in your village or at your work.
- **What breaks your heart?**

Another way to help you think about this: Finish this sentence-

"At the end of my life, I would like people to thank me for _____"

At your funeral- who would you like to be standing there saying- this man, this woman made a real difference to my life." ?

Other than you're immediate family- who should turn up because you made a difference to them- Who else would you like to turn up and say 'thank you'?

Now the problem with all these questions I'm throwing at you is this. IT WILL REQUIRE SOMETHING OF YOU.

- And this is one of the reasons we shrink back- "Somebody else really needs to do something"
- But the truth is- if you decide to move in the direction of "what breaks your heart"- it will require something of you.
- It will take some: TIME- MONEY- SAYING NO and missing other opportunities...

- It's going to cost you something. **Ultimately it's going to cost you some life**

And the problem with this is that, deep down, we're all one of these (What's this? LIFE PRESERVER!)

- By nature I'm a life preserver- I'm a life saver!
- I don't want to give away my life- Risk my life-
- That's why I have insurance- pension- burglar alarm- and an airbag- and personal time & a savings account.
- I do everything possible to preserve my life & the life of my family.
- And the problem with "*what breaks my heart?*" is that at some point I have to start letting go of some of this-
- If you move in the direction of that question- it's going to feel like you're giving up/giving away some of your life.

And as we wrestle with that very real (natural) tension..
Jesus comes along and he says this:

Whoever devotes themselves to themselves will have nothing but themselves to show for themselves

That's not exactly what he said- but this is my summary of his teaching on this.

- **Essentially he says-** At the end of your life, if this is all you've got to show for it- your life is a total LOSS.
- **If,** in your attempt to preserve your life, you have only yourself to show for it- you've actually lost your life- not saved it.

Here's what he actually said: Luke 14:25-

V. 25 A large crowd was following Jesus...

- Jesus is surrounded by crowds- crowds of sick people- and they all wanted to what? (Touch him). It's like those zombie movies!
- And Jesus couldn't escape the crowds. (Donkey's don't make great getaway vehicles). And when he finished speaking they followed him.

If I finished preaching- locked up- and you were all in the car park waiting for me- I'd be a little freaked. Then I get in my car and you get in yours and you follow me home!

Turning to them he said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters- "

- **He's not saying** you should hate your family- he taught the opposite.
- **This is Hyperbole-** (extreme exaggeration to make a point).
- **What he's saying is** "You need to make me- not your family of origin- the ultimate decision maker in your life." (Context – disciple)

He continues- **yes, even your own life.**

- **Again he's talking about who's in charge-** who you follow- who's in authority over your life- you or Jesus.

Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.

- **Of course you can't be Jesus disciple** if you (or anyone else) is in charge of your life- because to be Jesus disciple is to declare Jesus the leader of your life.
- **This is Jesus challenge to the crowd.** *"I know you're following me around- but you can't be my follower until you decide who's going to call the shots in your life- You or me?"*
- **And he challenges us too-** especially in new year season- because he's essentially saying this...

The essence of following Jesus is self-denial, not self improvement.

And Jesus isn't against self improvement- any more that he's against my mum and dad or my family.

He's saying- If you want to be my follower- not just follow me around- you've got to decide who calls the shots in your life. It's really more about self denial than self improvement.

27 And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.

- You can be my fan- you can be my admirer- you can follow me around and have a free lunch, or get your mum healed.
- But you are NOT my disciple until you decide to die to YOU- so you can say YES to me.
- And at this point- a lot of the 'what's in it for me' class left and joined the Pilates class running down the road.

Now if you're like me- this is all pretty heavy- pretty depressing.

- It sounds like Jesus trying to ruin my life!
- **But he was trying to say-** I have something better- not worse for you...
- But here's the problem- you will never be able to say YES to my better offer- until you learn to say NO to yourselves.

So on another occasion he says it again! (Mark 8:34)

**Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said:
"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.**

Then he goes a bit further and hits us right in the heart of our struggle with all this.

For whoever wants to save their life.....

- **Of course I want to save my life-** I'm a life saver/preserver...I spend a lot of time and money preserving my life- it's second nature.
- **Jesus isn't against that-** he didn't want to die!
- But what he is against is an attitude- where every day I get up and life is all about me.
- And everything in my life- Family- kids- wife- job- is a means to an end- and I am that end!
- Jesus says- If that's your approach to life- You're going to lose it

will lose it,

- The very thing you're trying to save- you'll lose.

but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.

- He's not talking about physical death- He's not talking about martyrdom. This was not about throwing your life away.
- This is about a person saying "Jesus- YES- whatever you want"
"Jesus it's your way- not my way" "Jesus, you're in charge"

This was a call- an invitation-

For Jesus to lead us- to step out of our own life and concerns- to follow him and give our lives away to something bigger and better and more fulfilling.

So to deny YOURSELF is to say "No" to YOU, so you can say "Yes" to something bigger than YOU.

- Because as long as I'm 'ALL ABOUT ME" I can't be about anything else.
- As long I'm "ALL ABOUT ME" I can never say "YES" to anything outside of me.

And if you decide to wrestle with the question *"What breaks your heart?"*

You'll be led away from you.

And if you want people to line up at the end of your life and thank you for something- ultimately you have to put yourself behind them.

At some point it has to stop being about SELF IMPROVEMENT- and it will have to become about SELF DENIAL.

Jesus says- I'm inviting you into that life- I'm offering to rescue YOU....from YOU- because left to yourself- you'll just live for yourself- a total loss.

Whoever devotes themselves to themselves will have nothing but themselves to show for themselves

And you don't want to do that.

Because there's one thing I can say with confidence about everyone in this room and everyone listening online.

YOU are not enough for you to live for.

There is more to you than a body- and a bank account.

There's more to you than self- improvement.

There's more potential in you than to just make a difference to you

That's why I don't understand why everybody isn't a Christian.

- Because this is an invitation to be part of something bigger and better.
- This is an invitation to life with bigger horizons than my own interests
- This is an invitation to significance.
- This is Jesus invitation to live a life of purpose.

Because at some point in life – you'll be in the middle of something- and you'll just top dead and ask this question. (Everybody does)

Does any of this matter? Does any of this make a difference? Does any of this count?

And the answer is- If it's ALL ABOUT YOU- then 'NO' it doesn't

But Jesus says- I created you for a purpose- and it's not about YOU.

And purpose is always found just over the line of "What's in it for me"

And that's why he said- "If you give your life away- you'll find more life- better life- a different kind of life to any that you've previously known.

SONG: Above all powers

Communion:

Video: Break our Hearts- V Beeching