

Church Like You Never Expected – “Wii”

Reconnect – May 31, 2009

Series/Morning Intro

- We’ve been talking over the last few weeks about “Church Like You Never Expected”, and for inspiration, we’ve used the Nintendo Wii – the invention that took video games from being a sitting, stationary exercise, to interactive and engaging on every level
- The idea is that this is what the church should be – our church, any church – a group of people that offer the chance to belong, believe and become as a part of the spiritual journey towards God
- Two weeks ago was “Thii” – everything starts with Jesus calling us to something MORE and we can start to **belong**
- Last week was “Mii” – the move towards **believing** that Jesus really is who He says
- And so this week is “Wii” – what can happen when belonging and believing come together, and change happens as part of a group of people – to **become**

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Peter replied, “Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you and to your children, and even to the Gentiles – all who have been called by the Lord our God.” Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this generation that has gone astray!”

Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church – about three thousand in all. They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord’s Supper and in prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity – all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

Acts 2:36-47, NLT

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Text: Acts 2:36-47; Romans 12:2

Key Thought: Faith deepens with the change that happens as we become: through experiencing life with Jesus together.

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Pre-Intro: The A-Team (video)

Intro: Getting the job done

- One of my favourite TV shows growing up was the A-Team
- On the run, a team of very different people, all with their own set of skills, helped those who had no-one else to turn to – plus, there was always lots of shooting, and no-one was ever seriously hurt, even the bad guys
- It was just about the coolest thing my ten year-old self could ever want, and we talked it up on the bus to Commonwealth Public School every Wednesday morning (because it was on Tuesday nights)
- One of the key repeated motifs of each episode was “the plan” – Hannibal, their leader, would think up a way to beat the bad guys, and it always involved building something, using parts that they had no way of ever having – and B.A. always welded something to help it happen – and it always worked just as planned – in this episode, the nuns and orphans were saved from the banditos and all was well

Your team and mine:

- Sometimes life is not that neat and tidy – and sometimes, no matter how much you need one, you can’t find an acetylene torch to weld things with – but there are times when we are part of a group of people, some of whom we might not even like, and things come together, and something really good is accomplished
- **Let’s get interactive:** Think about a time when you were part of a team that accomplished something special – maybe you were in a play, or it was a sports team, or something for a job, or a band
 - **What did your “team” accomplish?**
 - **How did you grow or change in the process?**
 - **What did you learn as a result?**

God puts together a team called the Church:

- This morning we're going to take a look at how God puts together a team that is designed to change the world – and He calls it “the Church” – and the story of how He did it has already been read this morning
- Almost 2000 years ago, there was a group of people trying to be patient, waiting for something to change – it had been seven weeks since Jesus had come back from the dead, and about 10 days since He had told them to go to Jerusalem, the capital city, and wait for something to happen
- He didn't tell them WHAT was going to happen, but He said that they would know it when it did
- Morning comes on the 50th day – it's another big festival day, and the city is crammed with tourists and pilgrims from all over the ancient world
- The 120 followers of Jesus are praying together as they've been doing for the past 10 days, and suddenly, something changes
- There's a deafening sound – like a 747 is landing on the roof – and suddenly, flames of fire appear over their heads
- And if that wasn't enough, they start speaking in other languages – the languages of the people who are in the city for the festival
- People start to rush for the square that they're hearing all this in – and suddenly, in the middle of a cacophony of languages all being spoken at once, and the questions of the people watching, Peter – “Rocky”, who most days is more “Watery” than “Rocky”, steps up in front of the same sort of crowd that less than two months ago scared his stiff and says, “This is what God has now chosen to do – it's all part of His plan”
- He goes on to link ancient prophecies from their history with the life and death of Jesus – who they directly or indirectly allowed to be falsely accused and then executed
- And we pick it up with Peter's conclusion:

“So let it be clearly known by everyone in Israel that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified to be both Lord and Messiah!” Peter's words convicted them deeply, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

- Something incredible is at work here – people are amazed at everything they've seen and heard, and they want to know what comes next, because they are cut to the heart at what's happened
- Maybe you've had a moment like that – when you “just knew” that something had to change with regards to where you were with God – something happened that scared you, or you saw yourself through someone else's eyes
- But maybe too, when something has changed for you it's been a result of many small choices, adding up over time to produce a result – maybe God just seemed to carry you along towards Himself
- **Let's get interactive:** think about a time in your life when you were “farthest from God” versus now, and the path you've taken since then:
 - **What has changed... in your thinking about Him?**
 - **What has changed... in the people who you are close to?**
 - **What has changed... in the life experiences you've had since then?**

Peter replied, “Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you and to your children, and even to the Gentiles – all who have been called by the Lord our God.” Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this generation that has gone astray!”

- He’s using language that his listeners would have understood, because they are all Jewish people, even though they are living all over the world – the festival is a giant homecoming for the nation
- God’s sent one has come, and this is what needs to happen – a change of heart and mind (turning from sins and turning to God) and actions to match (by being baptized – covered in water as a symbol of the cleaning job that God has done in their life – and letting that act be a declaration to their friends, families, neighbours and others)
- **Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit** – an incredible sense of the power and presence of God in your life on an ongoing basis – directing, comforting, leading, counselling – God actually, somehow, IN them and with them
- **Even to the Gentiles** - this promise, this movement is going to stretch all over the world – earlier on the writer of this section of the Bible lists the different places where everyone there that day is from – and by the end of this section, the message of Jesus will have been taken to all of those places
- **This generation that has gone astray** – some things never change, because you could use this same phrase to describe our generation, our society right now – that’s why the Lily Allen song that we played earlier is so hypnotic, so powerful for me – the emptiness that she feels even as she does everything that society tells her she’s supposed to do for wealth and fame, and the fear she feels as a result – it’s the epitome of the world we live in – don’t think, just spend, worry about your looks, get ahead the best you can – one way or another, that’s where we all are at one point or another, because that’s the prevailing current of the world we live in – and normally it can be hard to resist

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- And so the church is born – people who belong, believe and become
- Maybe you’ve seen this description of what we call the “early church” and maybe you haven’t, but it’s been an inspiration to Christians for centuries

- They're growing as individuals – in learning about Jesus from His closest followers, having spiritual experiences through prayer and building relationships as they remember Jesus with a meal
- But they're also growing as a group – God is clearly showing them that this is something they need to run with – so they start to help each other – suddenly, there is no-one in need among them – at all – everyone is taken care of – and who wouldn't want to be a part of something like that, especially if times are tough?
- They do everything together, and there always seems to be room for many, many more to join – there's joy, generosity, care – and it's spreading – more and more people are believing in Jesus as a result

The right conditions:

- Sometimes we'd like to think that faith is a private matter – that it's really only between us and God
- But that attitude betrays our Western bias towards individualism – the idea that we can do it alone, that we can be successful without anyone else's help – “self-made”
- And the longer I live, the more I realize that idea just isn't true, at least for me – who of us are REALLY “self-made”? Who hasn't had some help along the way? Who hasn't been formed, better or worse, by their interactions with others along the way?
- I think back in my life, and the times when God has changed me have been filled with other people – getting me to the right place, questioning me, encouraging me, walking with me
- God takes people, our relationships, and mixes that with our decisions, and puts the two together to create the ideal environment for growth in us
- **III. – gardening season** – it's gardening season in Barrhaven – even convenience stores seem to have “Garden Centres”, full of plants that may not live through the car ride home
 - I'm not much of a gardener – OK, I'm not a gardener at ALL – but my wife is – and she spends just as much time or more making sure that the conditions are right for the stuff to grow – getting bag after bag after dirty bag of soil
 - Where does it go every year? Are the kids eating it? Because every year we buy bags of it, and every year we need more
 - But you put that stuff on, and it changes things – and if you're hard-core, you get some miracle-gro or some other fertilizer or plant food – and things take off – the plant puts down roots that you can't see, and then just when you think it's never going to grow, it shoots into the sky
- I think that's sort of like how God transforms us and helps us “become” – he mixes together our belonging, our relationships, with our believing, our decisions and thoughts about Him, and creates the environment where we can grow
- If we lack one part or the other, yes, God can still do something with us, but we're nowhere near as flourishing or alive as we could be, no matter what we tell ourselves
- And too often that change in us seems like it's not happening – like we'll never change, that things will never get better – but then, all of a sudden, it's like everything is in place, and things take off

The seeds of greatness:

- My son, who is four, had to do a project this year for the school collections fair – meaning that my wife and I, who are NOT four, had to do a project this year for the school collections fair – but he helped
- We chose – I mean, HE chose seeds – so Dad headed to Bulk Barn and Mom got out the cardboard
- But seeing all those seeds glued on a backdrop – and even more thinking about how there are different kinds of seeds seemingly everywhere, from dandelions to peanuts (and no, we went peanut-free, don't worry – didn't want to be wreaking havoc at the collections fair) got me thinking about growth and potential, and what God can do with a single, little seed – and then it got me thinking further about what He can do with a single, little life like you or me or one of our kids
- God's goal is not to make better people or more productive members of society – it's to have a connection with us, for us to be a part of Him and Him a part of us, a relationship, a friendship
- And we don't do it for wealth or power or status, we do it because we know we need God and what He has for us, and we've tried it the other way and seen the damage that came as a result
- His plan for us is more than we could handle if we knew all at once or if He tried to do it all at once – but He does it a bit at a time – sometimes it's a change that WE want to make, other times it's one that He wants to make, and sometimes it's something that happens to us, and other times it's something we seek out, but one way or another, He wants to move us forward with Him

Belong. Believe... *Become*: where are you at?

- And that's what we've been talking about over these past weeks – how God moves us closer to Him and transforms us, one step at a time
- We come into the cycle at different places, different stages, and then we're drawn into it
- We call it "The Reconnect Way", although it doesn't really have that much to do with us – it's just the way that we describe something that God has been doing for hundreds and hundreds of years
 - There's the "Belong": "find the place already reserved for you as a part of our community"
 - And there's the "Believe": "further your relationship with God, no matter where you're at with Him"
 - And there's the "Become", what we've been talking about this morning: "follow Jesus into the incredible future He has for you"
- What does it mean to "Become"? It's to put something into action – to work with God to make the change He's been leading you towards:
 - Help your neighbour with a project
 - Take your wife away for the weekend, just the two of you
 - Have a family games night
 - Ask your kids what they think about God
 - Offer to do something for your boss you know they hate to do
 - Give up a habit that you know isn't going to help you in the long run
 - Invite someone to Reconnect – or tell them a little bit about your spiritual journey when the subject comes up
 - Ask God for help and then take it

Key Thought:

**Faith deepens with the change that happens as we become:
through experiencing life with Jesus together.**

“Don’t copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.” (Romans 12:2, NLT)

Conclusion: I’m Not Who I Was (Video)

- *[play the video]*
- This little song made an impact on me, because it’s a message that I want my own life to sing – that no matter where I’ve been or the struggles I’ve had, that today, “I’m not who I was” – even if someone still wants to label me that way, I know – and most importantly, God knows the difference
- He is changing me into what He knows that I can be, and He’s working to do the same with you – so will you and I get on board with what He wants to do?

Response:

- **Let’s get interactive:** where are you most at right now in your spiritual journey, and what God is doing in your life?
 - **The Belong stage?** Why?
 - **The Believe stage?** Why?
 - **The Become stage?** Why?
- What do you think that God is trying to do in you right now? And how can you help in that process? Where is the “sore spot” or the “alive spot” for you today?