

Reflection - 22 May 2022

John 4:1-26

We Too Can Bring Transformation!

Whether we like it or not we are all influencers.

We influence our families, our friends and acquaintances in fact anybody we rub shoulders with (our sphere of influence) we impact . The question is what is the outcome of our influence - does it bring good and is our persona one that makes a positive difference?

Like the fat controller in the popular children's series of Thomas The Tank Engine we control the many tracks that run in and out of our own personal "Central Station". The choice is ours and only we can determine whether we impact our world for positive change.

Did you know that as we meet and mix with people, that it is usually only a matter of seconds before they arrive at a perception of our personality or persona? Isn't that all the more reason to be sure we make a positive impact!

That being said, aren't genuinely positive people just great to be around?!

Martin Luther King Jr (1929–1968) lived and died to see society transformed. In 1964, he became the youngest person ever to receive the Nobel Peace Prize – for his work to end social segregation and racial discrimination.

He spoke powerfully and memorably of his dream that, one day, he would live in a nation where his children would 'not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character'.

He dreamt of a transformed world where everyone would be able to join hands and say, 'Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!'

Martin Luther King Jr was a follower of Jesus. His agenda was the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not just about the conversion of individuals – important though that is – but about the transformation of society.

Your life can have an influence, not only on your own family and local community, but also on your city, and even on the whole nation.

The writer of Proverbs makes the point that how we live as individuals affects not only ourselves, but also the world around us – for good or for evil.

Let's Read Proverbs 11:9-18

9 With their mouths the godless destroy their neighbours,
||but through knowledge the righteous escape.

10 When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices;
||when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.

11 Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted,
||but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.

12 Whoever derides their neighbour has no sense,
||but the one who has understanding holds their tongue.

13 A gossip betrays a confidence,
||but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.

14 For lack of guidance a nation falls,
||but victory is won through many advisers.

15 Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer,
||but whoever refuses to shake hands in pledge is safe.

16 A kindhearted woman gains honour,
||but ruthless men gain only wealth.

17 Those who are kind benefit themselves,
||but the cruel bring ruin on themselves.

18 A wicked person earns deceptive wages,
||but the one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward.
Here we see on one hand, 'when the righteous prosper, the city rejoices' (v.10). On the other hand, 'the mouth of the wicked' can destroy a city (v.11b). And, 'for lack of guidance a nation falls' (v.14). How then should you live? Don't slander your neighbours, but rather exercise restraint and hold your tongue (v.12). Don't gossip but be trustworthy in keeping secrets (v.13).

We all need wise, godly people around us to provide good advice: 'Where no wise guidance is, the people fall, but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety' (v.14, AMP). If you have wise counsellors consult them often. If you don't have them, ask God to provide you with such advisers.

Griff - You know there is nothing like good accountability and as old/young as I am, my experience has been where there is a lack of accountability especially in leadership how ever so often things go wrong - this unfortunately often happens in churches.

Be kind-hearted (v.16) and sow righteousness (v.18). If you live like this, the whole world around you will be affected.

Every church should be an inclusive church because God's love is radically inclusive. The church should be famous for its love. We should welcome people regardless of their gender, race or lifestyle. Jesus came to break down every barrier in our society.

Jesus' fame was increasing. 'The Pharisees were keeping count of the baptisms that he and John performed... They had posted the score that Jesus was ahead, turning him and John into rivals' (vv.1-2, MSG).

Jesus was not interested in rivalry, fame or competition: 'When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to

Galilee' (v.3). He was very interested in helping one individual Samaritan. He takes time to minister to her.

In this encounter, Jesus demonstrated that one of the ways in which society will be transformed is by the breaking down of divisions.

Jesus had a prolonged conversation with a woman in public. This flew in the face of the conventions of the time. The strict rabbis forbade a rabbi even to greet a woman in public, let alone have a long conversation. (v.27).

The division between Jews and Samaritans went back a long way. Samaritans were a despised and powerless minority – pushed down and without value. John explains that 'Jews in those days wouldn't be caught dead talking to Samaritans' (v.9, MSG).

Jesus does not compromise on the truth: 'Salvation is from the Jews' (v.22). Nevertheless, he reaches out to this Samaritan woman. In doing so he breaks the curse of racial discrimination and apartheid. The transformation of society requires the breaking down of the walls of division of race and ethnicity.

God loves you regardless of your previous life or present lifestyle. Thank God, he loves imperfect people. I'm still one of them!

Griff - isn't it so good to know that we are forgiven - there is now no condemnation - so good!!

Oh for the power of the blood!

In asking her for water, Jesus is showing us how to approach people who are broken and wounded – not patronisingly as someone superior but humbly like a beggar.

This woman would have been a social outcast. With a history of broken relationships, rejected and mocked by her own people, she comes to draw water all alone at midday.

Not only did Jesus speak to a woman who was a Samaritan, he spoke with a 'sinner'. This woman had led an immoral life. 'You have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband' (v.18). She has been divorced several times and is now living with a man to whom she is not married. Jesus does not compromise on the truth, but neither does he judge, condemn or reject the Samaritan woman because of her lifestyle or social position (cf. Mark 2:17; John 8:10–11).

Griff - isn't that a great example for the church: Embrace truth - show love!

The religious did not mix with 'sinners'. By his interaction with this sexually promiscuous woman, Jesus breaks down yet another barrier. Ultimately, it is only the Holy Spirit who can bring about the transformation of society. It is the Holy Spirit who brings unity, breaking down the divisions of gender, race and social position. Those indwelt by the Holy Spirit should be at the forefront of reaching out to the marginalised, the broken and misfits of society

Jesus' conversation with this woman was all about the Holy Spirit. She doesn't need a lecture; she needs living water. He says to her, 'All who drink this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life' (vv.13–14).

Jesus came to quench our thirst for acceptance, relationship and meaning. The life we receive is the life we give. We become a source of life for others.

The transformation of society starts with the Holy Spirit transforming our lives.

Griff, I've said it before - it is difficult to give love if we don't know what it is to be loved.

It starts with drinking the water of life, which Jesus gives to everyone who believes in him. When the Holy Spirit comes to live within you he becomes a permanent spring of overflowing water throughout your life and into eternity.

You are transformed by the Holy Spirit and by your personal relationship with God. The word used for 'worship' here means 'to go down on our knees, to draw close in an intimate relationship of love' – we 'must worship in spirit and in truth' (v.24).

In conclusion let's take a moment to consider:

We too can bring transformation.

Mother Teresa said, 'Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you.'

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