2020 06 28 Open Arms

Genesis 22:1-14. Psalm 13,

Romans 6:12-23, Mathew 10:40-42

(NOTE: IC = Interactive with Children.

IA = Interactive with whole Congregation.)

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“Allow the little children to come to me and do not forbid them”.

**IC**. Here we have a record of children crowding around Jesus and Jesus friends thinking that Jesus was too busy and too important to take time to be with the children.

? – what would make you want to get close to someone?

Do you think that Jesus was too busy and important to be with the children?

(Summarise what the children reply.)

Jesus arms are open to the children always and also to us adults.

Mathew 10:40-42

There was a time when Jesus was warning his followers that tough times where coming and that if they followed him there would be some trouble from people who did not believe in him.

He told them the most amazing truth – amazing is too small a word – “whoever receives you receives Me.”

**?IA.** Any thoughts about what he meant?

See the connection in what Jesus said the night of his arrest.

The night before Jesus was crucified, he told his followers that he Jesus was in God, we are in Jesus and Jesus is in us.[[1]](#footnote-1)

And “if you love me, you will keep My word; and My Father will love you, and We will come to them and make Our home in you.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

And “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; this is the Spirit of truth … the Helper, the Holy Spirit, the comforter, the Paraclete – the one who stays beside you – he will be in you. The love which God has for Jesus will be in us and Jesus will be in us.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The result or reality means that whatever happens to us happens to Jesus – if people treat us bad – Jesus is in us/with us and He feels it -if people treat us well then they are treating Jesus well Because Gods Spirit is in us the ALL of God is in us.

Jesus went on to say that whoever receives and shows respect to other people – no matter what their position in life they would receive a reward from God.

**?IC** (ab lib what was just said)Jesus said that if someone were to give something as little and as caring as a glass of water to “one of these little ones, they are doing it to me!”[[4]](#footnote-4)

What little things can we do for Jesus by doing them for others. E.g. a smile, helping someone, not being mean to other kids…

Now there are warnings that if we have the *wrong* motives for doing something good then we have already received our reward because our motives where selfish. There is one very frightening statement recorded when after people have died and they face Jesus – they tell him all the good things that they have done and Jesus says to some of them “go away from me because what did was not for me (not authorised) I do not know you.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

And to others ‘come’ and hold out His hand - I have a home prepared especially for you.

**?IA.** What could their motives have been?

Maybe they wanted praise and respect from others and some of them wanted ‘good’ feelings about themselves?

Consider the motive in these words of Jesus “when you pray do not stand on the street corner making a show so everyone can hear you.”

**?IC.** What do you think people would think today if I stood outside the Post Office in Eden and started praying aloud?

Jesus said “go to a private place and pray and God who is in heaven will hear you.”[[6]](#footnote-6) – that is where we will communicate with God and understand if it is Gods will or not and we will receive what we ask for.

There are other times where we are to gather together and pray as a group e.g. at the family meal table, at church or just a group of people. Jesus said that “were two or three gathers together He is with us!”[[7]](#footnote-7)

I have never had much of an idea of what the rewards in heaven are – but I do know that being with God forever will be/is reward enough – but that is another discussion.

**?IA.** It comes back to our motives – why do we want Jesus arms to be open to welcome us every moment of every day?

The incredible thing is that Jesus identifies so closely with us as individuals that when we feel happy, sad, whatever it is like it is happening to him.

**?IA.** what things that we feel sometimes would Jesus NOT feel?

Romans 6:12-23.

There are many things that open their arms to welcome us -some are good and some are bad – just consider the advertisements that we see or that are in books or magazines.

**?IC.** Do Maccas advertisement make you want one or an advertisement for a toy or **IA** a new car?

These things are trying to feed or awaken desires in us that are not helpful. Even if something is not a sin is may not be beneficial[[8]](#footnote-8) and somethings that we are ok with may give confidence to another person to get into them and it will harm them in body or soul or mind or relationships with others.[[9]](#footnote-9)

God tells us very plainly that “whatever things are of good report think on those things”[[10]](#footnote-10)

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any praise, think on these things."[[11]](#footnote-11)

**?IA.** Can we do this on our own?

The night before our Lord was crucified he told his followers that he would send Gods Spirit to live in those who believed and followed Him.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The Holy Spirit came and brought into us the character of Jesus – we call this ‘the Fruit of the Spirit’.[[13]](#footnote-13)

# If we follower the Spirits promptings in us we grow in our new character: love , joy, peace, perseverance, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control, perseverance.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

The operative word is ‘grow’. We begin our living in Jesus as a baby Christian even if we are old, and we learn to live and walk and run and skin our knees, get back up and …. Listen to what Paul wrote about this “baby food and growing into maturity”

“everyone who partakes of milk is not accustomed to the word of rightness, for he is an infant. Solid food is for the mature who because of practice have trained their senses to discern good and evil. Therefore leaving the elementary teachings let us press on to maturity …”[[15]](#footnote-15)

We have a choice and the more we go into the arms of the things that are good in Gods sight we grow, or if things are bad for us the more power and control that we give them and bring ourselves down.

At another church in Eden we became aware that a group of people were praying curses against the church and the people in it – our paster – an Indigenous man who is aware of these things said –“they have no power unless we give it to them!”

**?IA.** what things might we consider harmful if we get involved?

In this reading from Romans the writer tells us the total plain truth: “for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” V23.

Two roads, two worlds to live in: one where we do and think and feel whatever we want and turn our backs on *Gods arms* and love which reach out to us in Jesus.

*Or*: receive the freedom that God gave us in Jesus life and death and resurrection – the free gift of eternal life to those who come to Him and the free gift of God Presence, Gods Spirit in us as a guarantee than no matter what happens[[16]](#footnote-16) – good or bad or ordinary things – Gods Presence is in us and gives us strength and wisdom and a Companion who never leaves us or lets us down and always speaks the truth to us.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The choice is ours, as it was for Jesus, when he was tempted by the Devil to take a short cut and use magic to gain what he wanted - no - Jesus told him to ‘leave him’ because “God says “ and he would choose Gods way even if it was harder and longer.[[18]](#footnote-18)

There was the, for me, a heart tearing example when our Lord was praying in the garden the night that he was arrested – he knew what was coming and he pleaded with The Father that if there was any other way – but if there was not he choose to take our sins and become subject to death – He who had existed from all eternity was willing for the Fathers will – Jesus choose and we are saved![[19]](#footnote-19)

**Then Judas came with open arms and kissed him – the open arms of betrayal.[[20]](#footnote-20)**

There is a heart wrenching scene in the Mel Gibson movie ‘The Passion’ when the Devil said to the whipped, tortured and exhausted Jesus –

“you don’t really think that you can save them do you!”

**?IC** choosing - give a scenario and ask the children to comment:

cheating in exams or homework or sports or telling lies to get what we want – how would you decide?

We make mistakes and sometimes choose the wrong thing and it brings harm to others and ourselves. When we ’come to ourselves’[[21]](#footnote-21) and ask Gods forgiveness, God washes it away in Jesus death and resurrection. We can then be honest with someone that we have hurt -

honesty shows that we are real in what we have confessed to God and what God has forgiven. This is like receiving a cuddle from God and giving the other person a cuddle – even if they tell us to ‘get lost’ – God will never do that!

Gods’ arms, so to speak, are open to us to come, to grow and to know the Holy Spirits Presence in and with us.

? what do you like to do when you first get home, were do you like to be at home??

**In the last pages of the bible we have a promise from God of such a place in forever;**

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away … and I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold the living place of God is among people, and God will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will be no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away. A place where lions are our play friends and do not eat us.

Then He said to me ‘it is done, I am … the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts to drink from the spring of the water of life without cost’.

They who overcome will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be My children” [[22]](#footnote-22)

*How is that for open arms to run into and never leave!*

I will close by reading from Revelations 22:[[23]](#footnote-23)

“The Spirit and the bride say ‘Come.’

And let the one who hears say, ‘Come’.

And let the one who is thirsty come;

Let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.”

"Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

Come – Gods open arms are there for each of us.

1. John 14:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. V23 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 17:26 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Matthew 10:42 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Matthew 7:23 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Matthew 6:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Matthew 18:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 1 Corinthians 10:23 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 1 Corinthians 8:13. Romans 14:21 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Philippians 4:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Philippians 4:8, **KJV** [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. John 14-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Galatians 5:22,23 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. # Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

    [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Hebrew 5:11 - 6:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ephesians 1: [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. John 14-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Matthew 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Luke 22:42 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Matthew 26:47-56 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Luke 15:11-32 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Revelations 21:1-7 selected sections. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Revelations 22:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Matthew 11:28 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)