

JESUS SAID WHAT?!!**11th July 2021 – week 2****HillSide's Minister – Rev' Allan Booth****COMMITMENT****The world says: Don't commit yourself to anything. Live free!****Jesus says: Be absolutely committed to me and my mission.**

Matthew 22: 34-40

The Greatest Commandment*³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"**³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

About 7 years ago I had the privilege of being the forwards coach of the Penryn College 4th team. The lads in the team had ability and some even had natural challenge; so I learnt the only thing that was preventing them from competing for places in the first team... was their commitment to Rugby. The first team had some ordinary players but they were at every drill and practice, then would play their hearts out each week, they deserved their places just from sheer commitment. Nothing else mattered for one hour on a Saturday. Whereas some of my boys would pitch 2 mins before kick off, then only do what was necessary on the field... After lots of encouragement and pushing, some of them got the message and made the first team the following season.

I am afraid that a similar principal applies to the church at large, where many are followers of Jesus when convenient. But there are those whose every living moment brings Jesus and kingdom praise into their homes and communities. To be honest we are all somewhere between jaded and committed. So how can we bridge the gap? Can we draw closer to total commitment?

The short answer is... yes. If we diligently fulfil our baptism and confirmation promises we are well on the way to being fully committed to Jesus. When our first instinct in a crisis is to love instead of hate, to include before we exclude... when our action is lead by assurance and prayer. Then we are showing signs of being fully committed to Jesus.

The longer answer is to Spend time studying scripture, learning other points of view and challenging your own perspective. Submitting to how Scripture transforms you, instead of searching scripture to justify your worldview. To be drawing closer to Jesus we must be in regular conversation with him, in other words be active in prayer always. Pray in thanksgiving, pray in sorrow; talk to Jesus about the big celebratory moments and the small defeats, pray in the knowledge that we are more than conquerors by his grace, that whatever the world throws our way we share in the ultimate victory... when life gives you lemons, make Lemon Merengue Pie!

To draw closer to Jesus we need to intentionally put our fears and ego aside, and witness to the triumphs, miracles, and goodness of God in our daily life. Share the stories, in other words bear witness and testify to the Kingdom of Heaven present in the world today! The greatest show of commitment to Jesus is to participate in the life of the Church. Following Jesus is not easy, in fact very often it is the most difficult choice. However the closer we follow the more frequently the triumphs and blessings come along. The truth is that our perseverance through opposition strengthens others on their journey... we each keep another flame burning.

So far these things are mostly external, how we connect to and through community with Jesus. There are those quiet unseen parts of our lives that also must be included in our total commitment. It is life's greatest error to assume that we can be Christian externally but rebel inwardly. So our total commitment must be a willful thing 'I have decided to follow Jesus, therefore I will...' must preface every life decision because I have submitted my will to the will of Jesus. This includes our deepest feelings and emotions, our whole rollercoaster of emotions that all too must belong to Jesus who knows us intimately and keeps our focus on heaven. Remember our devotion to Jesus is only a poor reciprocation of his love for us... he gave up everything to become one of us, so we could learn a better way of loving one another and relating to God. When Jesus asks for total commitment, he knows what he is talking about.

The challenge remains for us to live our lives in full relationship with him.