

## JUST WALK ACROSS THE ROOM

16<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2022

HillSide's Minister – Rev' Allan Booth

### WEEK 3 – THE POWER OF STORY

#### **Blurb:**

*Regardless of who you are or what you might think others think of you, everyone has a 'before' and an 'after' Jesus story. This requires no special ability other than an objective sense of self, and a willingness to engage people in conversation. This is not boasting, but it is sharing of personal experience telling people about the difference Jesus has made in you!*

#### **Luke 19:1-10**

##### **Zacchaeus the Tax Collector**

**19** Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. <sup>3</sup> He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. <sup>4</sup> So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." <sup>6</sup> So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

<sup>7</sup> All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

<sup>8</sup> But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

<sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

#### **Sermon**

How are you doing with your walk across the room? Have you got up off your chair yet? In the first week we covered the importance of keeping things authentic and simple, last week we learned about living in 3D, to develop friendships, discover stories and discern the next steps.

This week I have a confession; I love a good story. I will often sit through a lousy movie just so I can see how the writer has wrapped up the plot... BTW lately there has been a lot of fuss made about a Netflix movie called 'don't look up!'... well I don't see what the hype is about, it's a good story very poorly told. By contrast Ken Follet's latest novel 'Never' tells a similar story brilliantly well.

A colleague from my former life with Telkom offers the truth that there are four sides to every story... what you say happened, what I say happened, what happened, and what the boss needs to know about what happened!

In our walk across the room, we need to be able to tell our story, yours and mine, in a way that people will want to hear it... You might think you don't have a story, well have you lived for more than two years? Then you've got a story, in fact you've got at least two, but we need to refine our story telling skills beyond the childlike style of... and then and then and then!

Let me offer you some tips... The first story has a frame that is simply: Before I was, I met Jesus, Now I am... We need to be able to tell people about the difference Jesus has made in our lives, so I used to be.... Then I met Jesus and ... Now I am.... It should be an authentic story of encouragement... the message being that Jesus has done this for me; I am certain that he can do something similar for you! ... the gospels have many examples, Zacchaeus of course, also Paul, what about Magdalene or the unnamed woman caught in adultery even the unnamed man born with a disability or Bartimaeus, remember Jesus saying to him 'what is it you want me to do for you?'.... Just like any one of them your story is unique, think of it as your very own Zac story.

The second story you are able to tell has a much larger frame John 3: 16&17. In other words, we can tell people what difference Jesus has made to the whole of humanity. Hospitals and hospitality, all creation, particularly every person has inherent dignity, women are not property and are worthy of the same respect you would give a man. Just to name a few differences between life before Jesus and life after Jesus. The trick is that we need to be able to tell both stories with humility... you're not the hero; clarity, hang it on the frame; and brevity don't use a thousand words when a hundred will do the job.

There is also a broader application....

20 years ago, there was no Hillside then some folk heard a call from God to meet a need... and now? What I am throwing out as a challenge is that together we need to refine Hillside's story. Has the plot line gone off at a tangent? Are we fading into ordinariness of the same old same old... perhaps we are following the marigold hotel principle... everything will be alright in the end, and if it's not alright then it's not the end! What will people be saying about Hillside in another 20 years?

Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time..., or let's go to Hillside Methodist Community Church because we can grow there!

Just as every follower of Jesus has two stories to tell, every community of Jesus followers also has those same stories. Here as Hillside, we have a golden opportunity... the beginning of our story is not lost in the mists of time. The middle of the story is ours to live and tell, if we do that humbly, with clarity, and with brevity.... Then it will become a never-ending story....

Let's say a prayer, Lord Jesus, we thank you for your great love for us and your presence in our lives. You have guarded and guided us for every step as we have responded to your call on us. We simply ask your continued guidance and blessings on Hillside as we continue to journey toward an unknown future. We moved forward Lord assured of your presence in our story and the story of Hillside enable us all to bring you glory, honour, and praise... Amen