

GOOD NEWS

Luke 4:14-21 [MW19-04]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Mangawhai and Hakaru, Sunday 27 January 2019

There were four people in a small plane: the pilot, a Mastermind champion, a Vicar and a boy scout. The pilot said, "Bad news folks. The engines are gone. I'm going to have to ditch the plane. The good news is there are parachutes; the bad news is there are only three. I've got mine. 'Bye!'" And the pilot jumped out. The Mastermind champion said, "The world needs me. My wisdom and skill are too important to be lost." He grabbed a parachute and jumped. The Vicar turned to the boy scout, "I'm much older than you. I've had a good life. You're young son, you take the last parachute." The boy scout replied, "Good news Rev. We'll both be saved. The Mastermind champion has taken my back pack!"

Good news, bad news, good news - the world ... and our lives are full of it

- today we're going to look for a bit at this "bad news ... good news thing" and I don't see why I should do everything or have all the fun here's a chance for you guys to get involved ... just a bit
- what is "good news"?
- what would be good news for you right here and now
- what comes to mind when you hear the words "good news"?

[time to think and share]

Remember our gospel reading?

- any idea what might have been good news in that reading???
- there was something for the poor for those who didn't have anything, couldn't afford anything, usually missed out
- freedom for prisoners, some kind of liberation
- sight for the blind
- those who suffered would be set free from the cause of their suffering
- the time has come, God will save you, now!
- sure sounds like Good News to me

For me the real Good News comes at the end of the reading, verse 21

- Jesus reads God's word of promise from the prophet Isaiah
- rolls up the scroll and sits down
- the people wait with baited breath: what teaching will he give?
- what illumination of the scriptures will Jesus share?
- all eyes are fixed on this person everyone has been talking about
- and Jesus says:
What you have just heard me read has come true today

God is real!

- today God is doing what he promised!
- Believe it!!!

Jesus brought Good News to the people in that meeting place in Nazareth that day

- how does that relate to us in this meeting place in Mangawhai / Wellsford this day?
- let me illustrate by telling you about something which happened when we had friends from Taupo staying with us one January

Andrew and Viv and their three girls came to spend a few days with us

- Andrew is a piper, plays the bagpipes
and the world champion small-pipe player was in town for a concert
I thought Andrew might be interested so we went along
- we had a great time and thoroughly enjoyed the concert

Afterwards we were laughing and talking as we went to the car park

- and got that sinking 'oh no, it can't be' feeling ... you know the one?
we went to where we thought we had parked the car
I didn't look at Andrew and Andrew didn't look at me
- because if we did it would confirm what we both feared:
Andrew's car had been stolen!
- Viv's handbag with cheque book and credit cards had been in the car
along with Andrew's work tools and borrowed fishing gear
- they were on holiday, away from home
and supposed to be going on to Whakatane the next day
- disaster!
TOTAL BAD NEWS!!!

Yet into my head came that verse from Romans, may be you know the one

- *we know that in all things God works for good with those who love him*

I remember thinking

- well I love you Lord, Viv loves you
don't mind that Andrew doesn't seem to be a believer
- I kept repeating that verse to myself
but I didn't think it was quite the time to tell Andrew!

We returned to the concert venue where people were very helpful

- they rang the police
gave us all the care and sympathy they could
and arranged a lift home for us
- the guy who drove us home took us by a couple of places
where stolen cars often end up, just in case the car was there
but it wasn't ... gone, no trace
- BAD NEWS and now Andrew had to break it to Viv
and he was more than a little worried about how she would take it

At first Viv thought we were joking

- I guess she hoped we were joking
but she could tell from our faces: BAD NEWS
- there were no words of recrimination
Viv hugged Andrew and said, "It's not your fault. I love you."
which was about the best thing she could have said

So what was the Good News for my friend Andrew?

- well, he knew for sure he had a wife who loved him
he knew there were good people who would help out in a bad situation
- but, he didn't have a car

Andrew had lost some very important gear

- his family holiday plans had taken a nosedive
- he was a long way from home and didn't have everything he needed close at hand

And you know, when your car is stolen, it doesn't matter who you are

- the mayor, wealthy businessman, priest
there's not a lot you can do
- who do you get angry at?
what can you do after you've phoned the police
and driven past some likely places?
- nothing ... absolutely nothing
except wait and hope and worry
and try not to say those two words: if only ...
- it's all just Bad News

I was quite hacked off about the whole thing

- so I went outside and had a bit of a talk to God
reminding him of St Paul's words in Romans 8
about all things working for good with those who loved him
- though I couldn't quite see it at the moment
and I prayed, I prayed something like:
"Lord, please touch the consciences of those who took Andrew's car
so that they return it; unharmed, intact ... soon"

The next morning I was rather disappointed that the car had not miraculously reappeared

- we let other people know what had happened so they could pray about it too
I took Andrew and Viv to town to do those urgent things required
because of the loss of their car
- then we had to leave town to pick up one of our children
who had been staying with a friend

When we arrived we got a phone call: GOOD NEWS!

- the car had been found
the fishing gear, tools, stereo, petrol vouchers, clothes ... all there
- about \$600 worth of gear was missing
but the car was straight, not even a dent or scratch
- right then and there I praised God for this GOOD NEWS

Later on Andrew rang back

- I don't think I have ever heard someone so relieved and happy
I could see his smile through the phone
- I said, "Praise God eh!"
and got a grudging grunt from Andrew

I told Andrew the prayer I'd prayed

- and that there were others who had also been praying for the safe return of his car
he didn't know what to say about that
though Viv agreed "Praise God! Thank you Lord!"

I believe God was at work in this situation

- yes, there was GOOD NEWS in the car being found and there is other GOOD NEWS in there too
- GOOD NEWS of God caring what happens
- GOOD NEWS of God being active and doing something about it
- GOOD NEWS of God bringing good things out of a bad situation
- I think a lot of good things happened for Andrew and Viv out of this 'bad news-good news' situation

It's true ... not all stolen cars are returned okay

- yet there is still GOOD NEWS
- the same Good News Jesus brought to the people in that Nazareth meeting place:
- God is active in the world
- God is active on behalf of his people
- God is on the side of those who are facing difficult situations

To every anxious feeling, every cold sweat, every despair, every sadness

- every devastating loss
- Jesus brings Good News
- God is here, God cares, God is doing something about it
- you are not alone or forgotten in this
- Jesus promises that there will be light, life and laughter, again
- for indeed, in all things God works for good with those who love him

This does not mean an end to Bad News (cars will still get stolen)

- what it tells us is that Bad News does not have the final say because the Good News IS!!!
- the GOOD NEWS IS
- believe it!!!