

## Model The Way

When in Nepal several years ago, we trekked high into the foothills of the Himalayas, and it was spectacular, especially at night time, when the stars shone so brightly in the dark night sky, but also across the valley we could see the lights of neighbouring villages.

Jesus said a city on a hill cannot be hidden. It was in the context of his followers being light in the darkness.

Jesus claimed to be the Light of the World and so by following Jesus, his light will shine into our hearts.

Over the last few weeks, I have had the opportunity to study leadership and the course is based on the 5 practices of leadership and leadership practice 1 is Model the Way.

Good leaders need to model the way for their followers. Jesus modelled the way for his disciples.

But Jesus did more than model the way, he claimed to *be* the Way. He said to his followers, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

I AM, was the name for God.

Not I was or I will be but I AM – I AM with you, I am in the present leading you into the future. I am the Way.

Christian discipleship is about modelling the Way of Jesus. We have no better model than that of Jesus. His whole life was surrendered to God's way. He walked and talked the Way.

The early disciples were not called Christians, initially they were called Followers of the Way.

As Christians we have a model to follow – a model which is Jesus, for he is the Way. So let us consider his life and what we should model.

**Firstly, his birth – Jesus was humble. He identified with poverty.**

The Apostle Paul sums up the life of Jesus in those words,

**Philippians 2 v 6:** *‘Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

The one who claimed to be the way – chose the way of humility - he was born in obscurity to a young woman in the most humblest of circumstances

So, to model Jesus, is to model humility, is to walk humbly.

**Micah 6 v6-8:** *He has showed you O man what is good, And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

There in the Old Testament – the prophet Micah highlights humility as a value for God's people to imitate..

**His life – He was full of love and compassion.** Everyone was welcomed. He didn't turn anybody away. His teachings were simple, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind and love your neighbour as yourself. This was His Way, God's way, for us to follow and walk with him.

He was often moved with compassion, he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, strength to the lame and paralysed, and even life to the dead. He fed hungry crowds, cured people with leprosy, cast out demons from the tormented, and met the spiritual needs of the wise, wealthy and poor. He worked and taught, and trained his disciples to do the same. In the words of the Bible, he went about doing good. He cared for the underdogs, the neglected, the needy, and took time with those ignored by others.

This is the Way that he walked, the way that he called his disciples to model. To Model his Way is to walk in his way. He taught as he walked the way, he didn't have lectures of seminars, rather he shared his life and was a model for others to follow. He presented to his disciples a life to be modelled.

Ever since this solitary life appeared on earth, his followers have sought to follow his example – to model his way. The early church followers, sold what they had, and distributed their goods to the poor. Offerings were taken to support those who were struck by famine.

Christians throughout the centuries have followed this model of Jesus. During the period of social reform in the 18th Century, it was the evangelical church community that worked for the abolishment of slavery, child labour and prison abuses.

Christians were at the forefront of establishing schools, healthcare and hospitals throughout the world. Others have given their lives to guarantee free speech, to alleviate suffering and to proclaim the message of Jesus, who

said that he had come to preach good news to the poor...to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed...

Jesus said, *I am the Way*, and he modelled the way for others to follow, and he calls us also today to model the way for others.

### **In death – He was faithful**

Even in his darkest hour he is modelling the way in death. He sets us an example for us to follow. He was only 33, with his whole life in front of him, and yet he chose to suffer and die for our sakes because he believed that death was not the end but just the bridge into God's everlasting Kingdom.

But that doesn't mean that he didn't struggle on this bridge – for Jesus took our human nature. He wrestled with darkness, and he even prayed for the cup of suffering to be taken from him, but it wasn't and he accepted God's will, trusting in his heavenly Father, that God's will, even when it is hard to understand is the path to travel.

If we truly want to get a picture of Jesus modelling the way, it's in his death, and the events that lead up to it, that show us how to model his way.

On the eve of his death, he gathers his closest disciples and friends and has an intimate time with them, explaining to them what was about to happen. He brings comfort to them, by telling them that there is a Mansion awaiting those who trust in him. He is going ahead to prepare a place for them. He is modelling the Way, he is the forerunner, and they have nothing to worry about death because he will triumph over it and open the doors of heaven.

So, he shares with them the Last Supper. A symbolic supper representing his death, the bread and the wine, his body and blood, shed for them. He is modelling the way and every time, they share in the sacrament, they are drawing close to him through faith. They are reminded of the cost of his suffering and they are reminded that they also are following a crucified Saviour but not a dead Saviour but a Saviour who has risen from the dead.

Then on the cross, in his dying words, Jesus is still modelling the way, as he is crucified with two criminals at his side, one taunts him, and one asks for that Jesus would remember him in his Kingdom and Jesus said, *Today, you will be with me in paradise.*

Here he is modelling the way again to those two men on the cross, one chose to follow, one rejected him.

Throughout Jesus' life, this was often the state of affairs, one would follow, one would reject, and so 2000 years after his death and resurrection, Jesus calls to us, to come and follow, to model our lives upon his.

His was a unique life, his was a life that shone brightly, he was God's way for this world, he was God's light, and so when we accept Christ as our Saviour, as our Lord, in doing so we become light bearers, we shine his light into this world for he lives within us and his light will shine in our hearts.,

Today in our service of communion, come and share in his sacrifice, come and participate in this one-off event of God coming to us In Jesus and offering us friendship and the opportunity to follow Jesus and model our lives upon him, come, receive and follow Him and let our lives model the way for others to see Jesus.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Amen.