

5 core values 3.

Preamble: series on 5 core values, we have established 2 first principles, that Jesus must be absolutely central to our identity, values and actions, and that he has called us to be a believing community.

OUTLINE:

A prophetic community

Firstly, as a Prophetic Community, we look to the ministry and character of Jesus who was a prophet, not just in his ability to foretell his betrayal, death and resurrection, or even the Fall of Jerusalem, but also in his stance to the powers of his time. At the outset of his ministry he said that;

"The Spirit of the Lord is on Me; because of this He has anointed Me to proclaim the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and new sight to the blind, to set at liberty those having been crushed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."¹

The prophetic Jesus:

- He challenged injustice
- He confronted hypocrisy

²³"How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest part of your income, but you ignore the important things of the law--justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but you should not leave undone the more important things. ²⁴Blind guides! You strain your water so you won't accidentally swallow a gnat; then you swallow a camel! ²⁵"How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy--full of greed and self-indulgence! ²⁶Blind Pharisees! First wash the inside of the cup, and then the outside will become clean, too. ²⁷"How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs--beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity.

Jesus confronted both political and religious abuse of power, wealth and status. In particular he challenged religious hypocrisy, emphasizing the inner reality of faith rather than compliance with the external forms. Throughout his ministry Jesus confronted injustice and hypocrisy. He also challenged human concepts of power wealth, status and security.

- He questioned culture: 'You have heard... but I say to you' Sermon on Mount
- He showed that power, fame and riches were not what they seemed, we should not show off, grasp positions, accumulate wealth, because there is a life of simplicity, peace and trust

¹ Luke 4.18-19

available – his words ‘a mans life does not consist of his possessions’ still challenges our culture today.

- As we will see next week, the way he treated the poor, the sick, the unclean and even women, was radically different to the accepted norm.

Radical commitment to Jesus therefore implies a suspicion of the dominant trends in society religion and culture.

He sounded the ‘Wake up’ call

Mark 1.14-15 Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God draws near. Repent, and believe the gospel.

- He proclaimed the reign and righteousness of God as top priority

Jesus made seeking the reign and righteousness of God a clear priority, and called his followers not to let human culture squeeze them into its own mould. By his example, he taught them to challenge false values that hinder God’s mission and threaten the integrity of creation.

A Prophetic Community

Following Jesus in...

confronting evil, injustice and hypocrisy.

Challenging worldly concepts of power, wealth, status and security.

A prophetic community:

- Conscience

“As Baptists we emphasise the importance of conscience”, in many ways we are able to act as a conscience for our society – not standing aloof and being needlessly critical, but echoing the incarnation, being in the world but not of it.

- Love and Truth : ‘speaking the truth in love’

The Baptist movement has from the beginning been one of conscience and dissent, it is in this willingness to make a stand for difference that we can be a Nathan to the David of government, or a warning Jonah to a society which oppresses the poor. This is prophetic through proclaiming God’s grace, yet warning of the consequences of ignoring him.

- Insight

We have a responsibility as those who are awakened to the spiritual myopia of our times to show things clearly in the light of God’s word and of eternity. In this we look beyond market forces or politics, and bring to bear the values of truth, of human dignity, God’s sovereignty and man’s free will.

- Action

Specifically this can be seen in campaigns for peace and justice, speaking intelligently in debates on ethical, medical and financial issues, and promoting Fair Trade.

As Baptists, we emphasise the importance of conscience, and of carefully listening to the voice of conscience. Having a dissenting history we should be unafraid to live distinctively and prophetically. In order to move towards becoming prophetic communities, we are invited to consider:

In the local church:

- Encouraging research into and responding to local injustices.
- Taking seriously issues of justice in the world of work (eg discrimination, exploitation, non-recognition of unions, childcare, pay and conditions) and supporting people who stand for right principles there.
- Developing practical programmes to experiment in simpler, greener, fairer living.
- Deepening an informed prayer life in which ethical issues are regularly featured.

In the denomination:

- Articulating a clear biblical understanding of servant leadership and applying it consistently to Baptist life and structures.
- Resisting worldly models of image promotion and unnecessary commercialism. In society and world:

In Society and the World

- Pressing for an increased share of world resources to be devoted to international development and conservation.
- Speaking out against policies and practices that widen the gap between rich and poor.
- Consistently promoting and celebrating faithfulness in relationships, particularly in marriage.
- Challenging the distorting influences of some parts of the media.