

The World That Needs to Be Changed

Sharlene Swartz – Thursday morning plenary

DVD Clip Part 1 – The SA Condition

Prayer and Reading Isaiah 58:2-10

Talk

1. The way things are
2. Our challenge in the light of these stats

No judgement

Philip Yancey tells a story that he heard from a friend who works with the down-and-out in Chicago.

A prostitute came to me in wretched straits, homeless, sick, unable to buy food for her two-year old daughter. Through sobs and tears, she told me she had been renting out her daughter – two years old!- to men interested in kinky sex. She made more renting out her daughter for an hour than she could earn on her own in a night. She had to do it, she said, to support her own drug habit. I could hardly bear hearing her sordid story. For one thing, it made me legally liable – I'm required to report cases of child abuse. I had no idea what to say to this woman. At last I asked if she had ever thought of going to a church for help. I will never forget the look of pure, naïve shock that crossed her face. "Church!" she cried. "Why would I ever go there? I was already feeling terrible about myself. They'd just make me feel worse.

What struck me about my friend's story is that women much like this prostitute fled towards Jesus, not away from him. The worse a person felt about herself, the more likely she saw Jesus as a refuge. Has the church lost that gift? Evidently the down-and-out, who flocked to Jesus when he lived on earth, no longer feel welcome among his followers? What has happened?

What is it about Christians that put people off?

Romans 2:1-4

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

AIDS is not God's judgment on the earth!

The bible does not teach us to be homophobic.

Compassion is about the character of the giver not the worthiness of the receiver.

Genesis 18:25 Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

No infighting

In fighting between holiness and not associating ourselves with the world
And

Living in the world with compassion and love.

There's place for all of us.

Structural change helps to bring about the kingdom.

During the years of the American Wild West, as the cowboys travelled across the prairies, they got to observe the behaviour of many animals including the wild horses and wild donkeys. When the wild horses roaming in their herds were surrounded and attacked by packs of wolves they would get together in a circle, facing outwards. In their frightened state they would begin to kick out causing greater panic and injury to each other. The wild donkeys on the other hand, would also get together in a circle when attacked but they would face inwards forming a kind of a laager. As the wolves approached they would kick out against the enemy forming an effective defence.

A heart for the poor

South Africa needs jobs as much as it needs Jesus.

Jesus fed the poor.

He didn't ignore them.

He didn't even teach them to fish.

He didn't ask if yes were going to sell the food for beer!

The bible is biased towards the homeless, the orphan, the widow, the foreigner, the poor, the oppressed, the prisoner – even those who are imprisoned by drugs, alcohol, lust.

Matthew 25:34-46

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing

to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Isaiah 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

Practical actions

No fear

If God prompts you – do it in faith.

Move on from the things that hold you captive. If you wait until you are pure and holy – you'll wait forever.

Stop building your walls so high. Alex and Sandton.

Respect and equality

The church is filled with racism and sexism.

There is hierarchy in the body.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Lose the materialism

Sacrifice.

Cassie Carstens at Transformation told us it cost R800 a month for a family to live on. How many people do you know who earn R5 000 or R10 000 or even R20 000?

Gadgets, shoes, clothes, cell phones. The latest of everything.

A young friend of mine gave away his clothes and his guitar and his surfboard. He never got it back. Too many stories – of how much we get back in return.

Lose yourself...

Romans 8:19

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed... the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

DVD Clip Part 2 – Challenge – Now to live the life