

## Jesus Gives Us His Gospel Soundbite. What is yours?

### Luke 4:14-21

We live in a culture with a short attention span. Over the last ten years our average attention span has dropped from twelve minutes to only five minutes. Are you still with me? How many of you would admit to thinking about some other task during the sermon? Maybe you've been distracted by your cell phone, reading the Fisherfolk, browsing the hymn book, writing a shopping list, checking your watch, or counting the number of parishioners in attendance. We live in a multitasking short attention span culture. Instead of reading a news story we want the headlines. We update our social media sites with a quick sentence or two of what's happening in our lives. We listen for sound bites instead of long speeches. We want to get to the heart of the matter and we want to do it quickly.

Many churches have adapted to our cultures communication style and adopted short 'what are we about' sound bite statements. Our Diocese happens to be a prime example. The sound bite of our Diocese is...does anyone know it... *We are family, we are disciples, we care for the last, the lost, and the least.* This statement with one quick glance lets viewers know quickly the heart of what we are all about. It is the first thing you read on the website and on all other forms of communication from the Diocesan office. It lets the world know what is our priority, our passion, and our future as we seek to live as followers of Christ.

Another example we find at the heart of a ministry we celebrate today with the commissioning of new leadership within the AAW group of St. Peters. Welcome Janice who will share a bit more about it shortly. The 'what we are all about' sound bite of AAW is, and I confidently begin with the words Jesus used: *the Spirit of the Lord is upon us because he has anointed us to unite in prayer and participate in the mission of the Church. To promote, safeguard and nurture Christian family life.* This is the priority, passion, and future of this faithful ministry as they seek to live as followers of Christ.

Some may take the stance on this that the Church may be bending too much to the whims of our culture by trying to summarize what we are in a sentence or two but this criticism would be misguided because two thousand years ago well before Facebook, Twitter and Google Jesus did this to. Jesus summarized what he was about by reciting memorable lines or quoting Scripture in new ways. Today we see Jesus go into the temple in his home town of Nazareth, turned to the prophet Isaiah and read, *'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. To let the oppressed, go free. To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'* He sits down and tells the gathered crowd 'so this is what I am about and I am here to begin this work.' In just a couple of sentences Jesus quickly let everyone know what he is all about. That God's Spirit is with him. That he has been chosen to preach the message of good news to the poor. Sent me to announce pardon to prisoners. Recovery of sight to those who are blind. To set the burdened and battered free. To announce to everyone "this is God's year!"

We know looking back over Jesus' life and ministry, and the influence and inspiration he is today for millions of people, that Jesus was and is who he said he was, and did what he said he was about.

What Jesus is about should be what we are about. Everything else that makes up the life of a Church comes second. Discerning how the Spirit is calling a church to join Jesus' redeeming movement should take priority. A way to start to discern this might be to ask 'what am I all about' for God. What is my sound bite?

So, what *are* you all about? What is the part you play in this Holy Narrative of Life and Love? What has the Spirit put on you heart to be and to do? What has the Spirit put on the heart of our church? The answer to this question will become all the more important during this season of change as we work to put together our parish profile.

What it is though is not a vision statement, a dream, a goal, or what you hope for. It is not what you have been taught at Church. The doctrines, affirmations, the catechism. It is what the Spirit puts on your heart, the fruit of which you may have seen in your life already. I encourage you to invite God to speak to your heart today about this. I encourage you to try and put your thoughts into words or an image. Do the work of discerning what is your priority, your passion, and your future as you seek to live as a follower of Christ.

Would you like to hear my 'what am I all about' sound bite?

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to share the beauty of God with all whom I meet. To be an artist. To be a great wife and mum. To befriend and support the weary, the guilty, the outcast and misunderstood. To cultivate and serve God's church within and beyond her doors. To safe-keep and administer the Sacraments. To teach and preach the life and importance of Jesus that all creation may journey into the fullness of God.*

I hope to hear yours too one day. In this 'temple', like Jesus, I hope to see you one day stand and tell us what *you* are all about as you seek to follow Christ. When it is spoken out loud and witnessed by others, it is bound to you like a marriage. It will gift you great purposefulness and meaning. It will not be perfect, neither will you, but it will be an amazing life-long adventure. I can't think of anything more wonderful than to journey with him who once trod these earthly roads and now in Spirit.

Amen.