**Church values 2021: Welcoming Bible study**

This is the third of three values we are focussing on as a church this year. We started with repentance and then generosity. Welcoming is a natural follow-up because it is a specific type of generosity directed toward our fellow people.

**Discuss the following definition of welcoming. How is the definition helpful? Are there areas where the definition is incomplete?**

**Welcoming:** The opening of my world to allow another to enter.

**Orienting questions:** Where have you experienced being welcomed in as an outsider? Where have you made to feel left out? How did you feel during those experiences?

**The basic principles:**

**Read Deuteronomy 10:12-22:** The context of this passage is that the nation of Israel has been brought up out of the land of Egypt where they had been captive as foreigners for 400 years. God is forming them into a nation in the desert and he wants to embed in them a culture (way of being) different from all other nations.

What are the some of the key characteristics that God wants his chosen people to be like in these verses?

How should the experience of being foreigners in Egypt have shaped the culture of the new nation? How should previous experience of being marginalised shape the way we see and treat others?

Consider the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12:1-3. How does this Deuteronomy passage continue the story of God’s plan for his people?

**Read Isaiah 58:2-10:** Nicholas Wolterstorff coined the phrase ‘the quartet of the vulnerable’ to describe four groups that the scriptures continually call the people of God to display justice by meeting the needs of. These are the widows, orphans, foreigners and the poor.

Why do you think God links our spirituality (Fasting I have chosen) with our practical outworking of welcoming and caring for these marginalised groups?

Reflection:

What practices of the heart and hands do we need in place to ensure we have a welcoming, open-armed posture to people?

**Luke 7:36-50**

What did Simon not do to welcome Jesus as was the expected custom? Why do you think he didn’t?

Ponder Jesus connection between being forgiven and loving. Describe as best you can how they correlate?

Was Jesus saying that Simon has little to be forgiven?

Reflection: If your ability to love especially those on the margins was measured right now what would it say about how you understand how much you have been forgiven?

**Luke 15:1-2, 20-32** Jesus parable of the prodigal son is such a key story for us to understand the heart of our Father God. The context is about who do I consider worthy of being welcomed in.

In what ways was the older brother justified in his frustration with his younger brother? Is his frustration appropriate?

The Father is viewing the return with another lens. Contrast the lens through which the Father and older son are viewing the frustrating younger son. How should this story effect the way we view people in our lives.

**Matthew 25:31-46**

What is Jesus saying is a key measure that will be used in the final judgement? Why do you think that God will use this as a measure?

Is this a gospel of works (that is that I am saved because of what I do)? C.f. Eph 2:8-10

Personal Reflection questions:

* How has your heart changed as we have considered the values of repentance, generosity and welcoming?
* What practices are you putting in place?
* Where have you repented?
* How have you become more generous with your time, gifts, energy, and resources?
* Who have you been inspired to open your arms to?
* What are examples of barriers that we put up that prevent people from being made to feel welcome?

May God bless you in your continued pursuit to honour him with your life.