



Welcome to our Sunday Service (25/07/21)

Transparency and Integrity

Prepared by Mervyn and Kathryn

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word;
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his Name!
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age to same;
his holy Name--the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by.
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!
Words and music by Timothy Dudley Smith



People judge by outward appearance, but the
LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites,
for they love to pray standing in the synagogues
and on the street corners to be seen by others.

Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in
full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close
the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.
Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret,
will reward you." Matthew 6:5-6



Father God, you bring light into our
darkness, order into our chaos and
peace into our storms. Thank you!

You bring truth into our lies,
forgiveness to our guilt and comfort to
our sorrows. Thank you, we invite you
into our lives afresh today because we
need your presence.

Each of us are as an open book before
you, we cannot hide. We ask that you
would purify our motives and heal us
where we hurt, so that your light and
joy will shine through us bringing your
hope to our corner of the world!

In Jesus name we pray. Amen

"Beware of practicing your righteousness
before other people in order to be seen
by them, for then you will have no reward
from your Father who is in heaven."
Matthew 6:1

“Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.” Matthew 7: 1-5

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139: 23-24

Today we are looking at the last in our series of Core Values—Operating with transparency

Transparency - Allowing light to show through, so that objects behind can be distinctly seen. If something is transparent, it is see-through, clear, easy to detect. What you see is what you get.

We have stated in our core values that we want to be a church that operates with integrity and transparency.

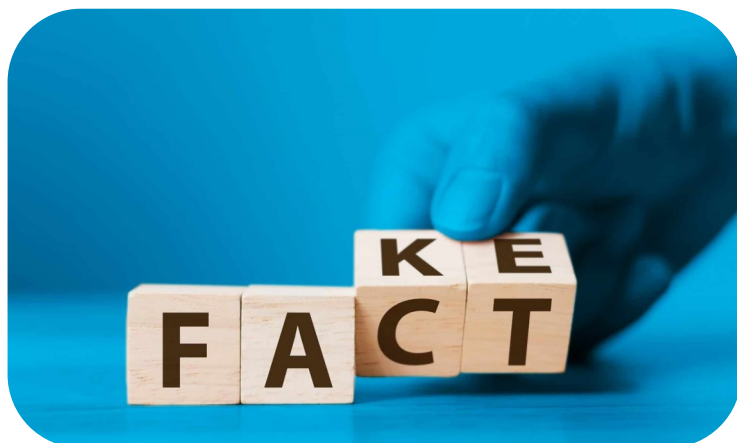


What does it mean to be a transparent person and a transparent church?

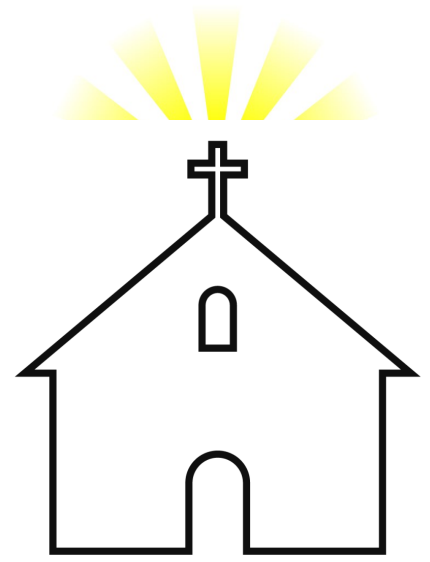
- ◆ People trust you because they see that you have nothing to hide.
- ◆ You are an honest, credible person/church who has integrity (not divided, the inside of you matches the external persona that you put out there for people to see).
- ◆ You are open and vulnerable by being real. You are accountable, able to be explained and understood.

Where there is no transparency, then it's all too easy for suspicion to arise or corruption to take root. If we are not genuine, then there's the risk of losing everything, because at some point there is the likelihood of being exposed.

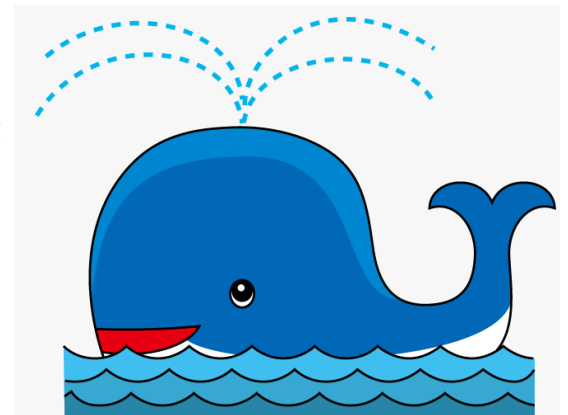
As a church leadership team, we are committed to transparency as one of our core values, and you are able to hold us to account if you think otherwise. Where there is no transparency between church leaders and the church, then all too often those undercurrents of dis-content can ripple through, and a church is divided. People just leave, often without explaining why, leaving hurt on both sides.



Does transparency within a church mean that we are all expected to overshare intimate details of our lives with everyone. Not at all. It's hugely beneficial to share deeply with one or two people that we trust, and house-groups are often places where people feel able to do that. Being a transparent church is something that we are strategic and purposeful about in the way the we share information, admit our mistakes/weaknesses, handle our finances, take decisions, and define ourselves, so that others can see openness and reality. A transparent church is a church that is -at the centre- what it says on the tin! A transparent church is made up of individuals who as part of having integrity as a Christian are committed to being transparent.



Today, we're going to look at Jesus, the transparent man, I was so encouraged and excited preparing this, when seeing the life of Jesus through our definition of transparency..... ***'allowing light to shine through, so that things behind can be clearly seen'***, because the more I look at Jesus and the way that he lived, I see for myself what God is really like. He is not who I perceived him to be through the various impressions I had picked up along the way. As Jane shared earlier... when her exposure to a real whale in no way matched what she believed a whale looked like, there is a monumental shift that takes place in our understanding when we take a good look at the real thing. When we take a good look at Jesus, we see that his life was (and still is) a window in which passers by can look through and see God as he really is. Like Jesus, your life and mine is like a transparent window by a busy road through which passers by can look. The challenge is.... What do they see?



Jesus, the transparent man shows us what God is like!

In so many instances we see the light of heaven shining through Jesus, so that the principles of The Kingdom of God behind everything he did or said could be clearly seen on earth. We've seen the heart of God revealed so often recently through the parables Jesus told, or the restoration that he brought in the lives of some of the characters that we have looked at in our services together.... The prodigal son, the woman caught out committing adultery, the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years, the man called Legion whose mental health, self-harming and demon possession had driven him crazy, the widow whose only son had died.... on and on we could go! Jesus, the transparent man is transmitting the light of heaven to planet earth. **John 14: 9. Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.**

Jesus, the transparent man attracts attention!

The light of heaven shining through the life of Jesus attracted thousands of followers both during his 33 years on earth and in the 2000 years since. His life stood out in a way that could not help but attract attention and raise eyebrows. People were attracted by the miracles he performed, he drew the attention of the Jewish Religious leaders because he criticised them, exposing their hypocrisy and double standards. They felt threatened by him.



He claimed to be The Son of God; that certainly got him noticed and caused a great deal of anger. He hung out with people who were social outcasts.... Lepers, prostitutes, con men, those who were blatantly sinning. His elevation of women and the respect he showed them was extremely unusual.

He was different, he was controversial. It was expected that as The Messiah, he would drive out the Romans through force, yet he taught people to love their enemies - that's a tough one to get your head around for sure!

He caught the attention of the Romans who suspected that he may be yet another rebel leader who could potentially rise up against them, so they kept an eye on things; they were certainly uneasy about the massive growth of his popularity. Jesus, the transparent man attracted attention. Jesus still attracts attention. He hasn't faded away into history as some vague figure from the past.

Jesus, the transparent man withstands extreme scrutiny!

As his popularity grew, his transparency was placed firmly under the microscope for public scrutiny and examination. He lived under the extreme scrutiny of those who were watching him constantly, just looking for the smallest trace of sin in order to catch him out. In [John 8](#), we find the pharisees scrutinising his life, trying to unpick some small detail and in verse [46](#) Jesus asks.... **"Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?"**

Under the microscope of their scrutiny, Jesus was found to be without sin. Instead they saw what usually could not be seen - they saw God. They saw righteousness and holiness, justice and mercy. In the transparent life of Jesus, heaven was opened for all to see.



His life is still under scrutiny, even today. In fact, he probably faces more examination now than when he was here on the earth. Every part of his life is pulled to pieces and examined from every angle. Every word, phrase or sentence, every interaction with others, everything he did continues to be under the microscope where scholars and experts dissect and analyse every minute detail of his life, and still, even today –not one person can convict him of sin!

Jesus, the transparent man brings a reaction!

The transparent life that Jesus lived produced quite polarised reactions, as it always does when people encounter him. It's easy to be indifferent when you haven't encountered someone, but when we are confronted with Jesus Christ it forces us to react. Wherever Jesus drew followers, we see that for some, his transparent life brought about a reaction of humility and repentance. For others, his life fuelled a reaction of hatred and pride. Why? Because in the light that was shining from him, their hypocrisy and sin was exposed. **Why**

does the transparent life of Jesus cause such a violent extreme reaction, both in his earthly life and now? The reaction of those Jewish religious leaders who encountered him gives us a sense that it must surely be that most untransparent quality of hypocrisy; the opaque life where what you see on the outside does not match the inside was exposed, and they felt threatened



When placed next to Jesus, the light of Heaven shines into our interior lives and reveals that the way we appear to be, and the reality of who we are may be entirely different. **What reaction does Jesus the transparent man produce in you?**

And so, as with all the core values that we have looked at as part of this series, Jesus clearly shows us what living transparently looks like. As Christians, whether in our personal lives or together as part of the church, we are like a window through which others can look and what they see will give them a clear reflection as to what they think God is like. This reflection at times may be inaccurate or distorted just as the picture of the whale did not adequately- or correctly -show Jane what a whale truly looked like.

There is a perception out there amongst many people that the church in general is full of hypocrites. If they are referring to people that they know who profess to follow Jesus, and yet clearly are not following him, then they well may be right, but there is often a perception from outside that those who follow Jesus should instantly match up to Jesus; their lives should display all the characteristics of God; love, acceptance, holiness, justice, mercy, forgiveness.



The practice of claiming to have moral standards or beliefs to which one's own behavior does not conform...

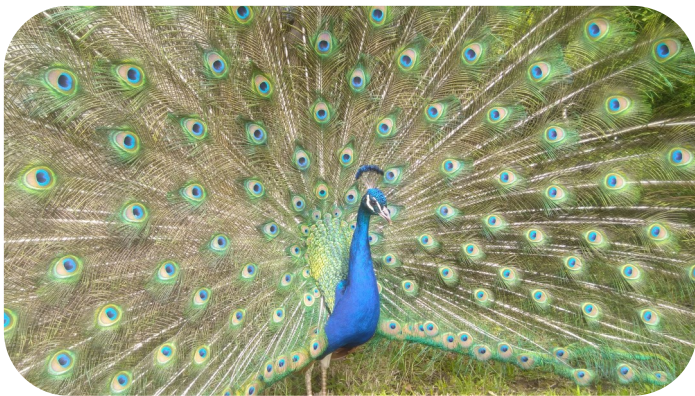
Those who follow Jesus are expected to attract attention because they are different, and the details of their lives are scrutinised and examined to see if what you see is actually what you get, and all too soon Christians can be written off as hypocrites, but is that always fair?

Jesus is as always our example and the one that we aspire to be like as we journey with him. He is the one who will produce his likeness in us as we are honest and transparent with him. The one thing he requires from us is transparency. **Psalm 51:6, "Surely you desire integrity in the inner self, and you teach me wisdom deep within."**

As followers of Jesus, we are on a journey to become more like him as his light penetrates more deeply revealing those things that need to be addressed, confessed or healed. Church is not made up of perfect people who have arrived, it is made up of people who are hopefully being honest and transparent about their sin and their weaknesses, and are in relationship with God who is at work in them by his Holy Spirit to make them more like Jesus. It's a work in progress. The hypocrisy comes when we try to cover up our sin and pretend to be something that we aren't. Being transparent means taking risks, that may mean speaking with someone that you trust and making yourself accountable in areas where you struggle, but want to have integrity and that can be scary.....

I'm going to hand over to Mervyn to close out this talk from a personal perspective....

For me the concept of transparency is both wonderful and terrifying, the relief of being fully known is incredibly releasing and liberating, but the process of being exposed is very scary. Our natural instinct when we know we have done something shameful is to hide that part of ourselves away and try to pretend everything is ok. We inherit this from our first parents, Adam and Eve who tried to hide away from God and cover themselves up because they felt shame. Human beings have been hiding and trying to cover stuff up ever since. On the whole, we are masters of presenting what we think people will accept about us, and hiding the things that we feel will cause people to reject us. I think of this as front stage and back stage.



Here is a beautiful example from nature of front stage and back stage!! There is nothing shameful about this particular back stage, but it's reassuring that we are not required to be stunningly beautiful from every angle! When we consistently pretend to be something that we know we are not this is hypocrisy, a word which in it's original Greek translates as 'an actor.'

God doesn't want us to live with the stressful tension of 'acting', but to know that if we are honest with him he will accept us, and line up our secret back stage lives and public lives to be at peace with each other. Church is one of those places where hypocrisy can develop if we feel we need to measure up to certain social standards, and sometimes it's much easier to act than be honest. This is an issue God is still working on in my life.

Jesus completely knows the worst about you and me, the things we do that cause us to hide and feel shame and he doesn't reject us. On the contrary, he wants to be our friend in that place. As we experience the friendship of Jesus in the hidden places of our lives, that gives us the confidence and grace to become increasingly transparent and this is utterly life changing.

Remember the woman who had gone through 5 marriages and now had a live in-lover; following her conversation with Jesus she ran back to her village, to the people who looked down on her and said "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done." Her deep emotional hunger had driven her to multiple relationships and a place of shame, but the love of Jesus met those deep needs and led her to a place of being completely transparent. This passage always makes me smile because if I met a man who told me everything I had ever done I wouldn't want you to talk to him! Unless it was Jesus of course!



May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of
The Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.