

## Share values

Amos 4:1 – 5, John 19:1 - 12

Last week I met a lovely woman whose daughter is getting married soon. Of course she's flat out planning a wedding! Exciting ..... and challenging too!

The woman I met is a pastor, married to a pastor, and her daughter and son in law to be are pastors too. Between them, and the husband-to-be's family, they know a lot of people. 350 people are invited to the wedding. They managed to whittle the numbers down to 150 for the reception.

That's still a lot. That costs a lot of money. The mother would like to have the reception as a good old Kiwi casual barbeque. Maybe the family could supply the meat and the guests could bring a salad etc. That's the kiwi way right? And think of the money you'd save.

The challenge is that the groom comes from another culture. In his culture you provide lavishly for the guests. A failure to do that would bring great shame to the family.

On the surface it looks like a simple clash of cultures. Underlying the cultures though are differing values. For the other culture hospitality is the key value. For the Kiwi family the key value is simply being together – it doesn't matter who pays for what.

Today we continue our series in Hahi Karaitiana, Christ's Church, and our theme is about sharing values. Last week Karl talked about sharing food – why it's a good thing to do. He told us that sharing food is about hospitality and friendship and much more. So sharing food becomes a vehicle for living out the values we hold; if we share similar values.

As Christians sharing similar values should be easy peasy right?

Of course our values will be the same. We all follow the same God, read the same Bible. Of course we'll be on the same page with our values – right?

Hmmmm.... We often assume all Christians have the same values. That can easily lead to conflict. Sometimes we think conflict arises because of a particular issue or because of differing beliefs but underlying those surface things are our values. Most of the time we never think about our values at all. They are held unconsciously and we often don't even know what they are.

...until someone else's values are different to ours that is .....

And then, look out! All hell can be let loose on those whose values are different to ours.

Can we then enjoy genuine fellowship; unity even; with someone whose values are very different to ours? Is it possible? I believe it is but we'll come back to that in a few minutes.

Today we'll try and describe what values are. We'll consider briefly how they are shaped and how they are changed over time. Then we'll look at ways we can genuinely appreciate others with different values to ours.

Let's try and define what we are talking about. How would you define values?

One dictionary defines it like this:

principles or standards of behaviour; one's judgement of what is important in life

That's not a bad definition. Values do form the foundation of our lives. They drive our choices and determine the direction of our lives. Values influence our decisions about everything really – spirituality, relationships, career paths; even the way we use our recreation time. Our character is formed by the values we hold.

The most common way that our values are passed on to us, usually unconsciously, is by our parents. And by our wider whanau, by society generally and by those we mix with – our friends.

Most of us do not consciously choose our values. They are simply absorbed by what we see or sense all around us.

Few of us sit down and think about what is really important to us and why. Even fewer of us re-examine those values and ask ourselves if they are still as important as they used to be.

So what if we did want to check out our values? Where would we even begin?

Psychologists suggest we look at how we were brought up as children especially looking at what we were rewarded for. Perhaps it was being pretty or passing exams or being good at sport. Maybe it was being independent or sociable or responsible or simply giving things a go.

Take a moment to think about that

Then they suggest we look at our own lives. We can talk a lot about what we value but how do we live? If we do have choices (and not everyone does) then where do we live? What occupies our time? What do we spend our money on?

It's really easy to say we believe one thing and to live another. The prophet Amos has very strong words to say to some women whose values have become corrupted and for whom self-interest has become more important than caring for the poor.

Take a moment to think about how your life reflects the values you think you hold.

And then maybe ask yourself if the values reflected in your daily life are what you really want.

Confession time:

For me that was not the case in some areas. For example I hold a value that people are far more important than tasks. People are what really matter in my view. Nothing gets achieved unless people feel valued and respected.

And yet my life has not been as congruent in this area as I would like. When someone says to me "I thought about coming to see you but know how busy you are", it breaks my heart.

And so it was time for me to re-evaluate. Do I really value people or do I just say I do? Because my life has not reflected that. My life has been over- full of other things. So part of Kevin's and my decision to move to Christchurch reflects our underlying value that people actually do matter. We want to have more time to be with people – with our family certainly – and also with others.

Let's turn to something a lot more radical than that. Let's look at the three main characters in the Gospel story we read today:

- Pilate
- The Jewish leaders
- Jesus

What would you say each individual or group values the most?

In the interest of time maybe choose just one person or group to think about now. What do their actions in this story (or other stories you can think of) reveal about their underlying values?

#### Feedback given on the day of the sermon

- Pilate  
Respects Roman law but not Jewish law  
Pragmatism  
Valued his role of authority  
Believes in justice but not at the cost of his own rulership (or maybe life)
- The Jewish leaders  
Prioritised God's Kingdom  
Valued the Law as the way to usher this in  
Also
- Jesus  
Values God's plan above all else  
Non-violence is important to him  
Humility is evident  
Ultimately he trusts God

Of course we can't be sure what values they held; we're just making an educated guess. What is clear though is that there was a definite clash of values. They were all working at cross purposes.

Which person/groups values would you rather embrace? Do you have those values already? If there was one value of your own that needs revising, what would it be?

Okay – we've thought a bit about our own values. We thought about the values of the three parties in our story.

I said earlier that our character is formed by the values we hold. That is true of us as individuals and it's true of us as a church. The values we really have, not so much the values we talk about, but the ones we live out, those values reveal the true character of our church.

I think this church is very good at living with others who hold different values. I see this in our desire to stay part of the Anglican Province in Aotearoa NZ regardless of some values some of us hold differently to others within the Province.

You have demonstrated that we can not only live with, but also respect and include those we differ with.

I've noticed a growing inclusivity in this parish. It seems to me that if our key value is love and inclusivity then embracing those with differing values will happen. It will never be easy but it can happen. I see it in operation and am certain it will continue here.