

Getting What's on the Box: Living Lives of Integrity 27 January 2019 St Peter's Church

Reading: Luke 4:14-21

*Faithful God, open the Bible to us in a fresh and exciting way.
In Jesus name. Amen.*

It's always good when you get a product that does what it says on the box. I don't usually do product endorsements but one product saved our holiday.

Rosemary and I holidayed for five days in Alexandra in the camping ground. The trouble with camping is that you hear every noise. We tried really hard to get to sleep on the first night but the kitchen door squeaked really badly. Because a lot of fruit pickers were staying in the camping ground it squeaked right through the night and then some more at 5am. It was so bad we talked about moving but then we struck on a cunning plan. When nobody was watching we sprayed the hinges and springs of the kitchen door with CRC. Like it explains on the can itself: 'CRC is a toolkit in a can'. In fact, we also sprayed the chiller room door and gave it several swings. Anymore CRCing and I was in danger of being appointed the camp handyman. It worked a treat although I was worried that if I snored, I might wake up with mouth full of CRC.

With Jesus you get what is on the box. He describes his ministry as, "I have come that you might have life in all its fullness." And that's what you get. Today we have him standing up in his home synagogue and reading from the scroll. Like us they had a lectionary of readings but Jesus chose instead to read from Isaiah (he wasn't an Anglican) "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me, he has sent me to preach*

good news to the poor, to proclaim release for the prisoners and sight to the blind, to set the captives free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

Then he said something that was not in Isaiah, *"I am the fulfillment of these words,"* and he sat down.

What followed was one of those awkward pauses and then the shouting started. Eventually everyone got so wound up that they tried to kill Jesus.

These words of Isaiah form for Luke our gospel writer a kind of job description or a mission statement for Jesus. He is to be the one who brings good news, release, sight and freedom. But something more. The phrase, "the year of the Lord's favour," is a catch phrase. Luke and all the people of the synagogue knew this to mean the year of Jubilee. The year of Jubilee happened every fifty years for the Hebrew people and it was to be a time of reckoning. In the year of Jubilee all slaves were freed and all debts were forgiven. Imagine having your mortgage written off. Applying the year of Jubilee would have seriously upset the apple cart. But this is Jesus' ministry in a nutshell: unbinding, forgiving and starting again.

The good news is that with Jesus you get what's on the box. When what someone promises and what they do line up completely we call that integrity. Jesus lived a life of total integrity.

People are always attracted to lives of integrity.

Legend has it that a missionary lost at sea was by chance washed up on a remote island. The people of the village nursed the half dead

woman back to full health. From then on, she lived among the people for 20 years. During that time, she confessed no faith, preached no sermons, sang no hymns, and made no claim to faith. But when the people were sick she attended them, sitting long into the night, when the people were hungry, she shared her food, when the people were lonely, she was a source of company, to the ignorant she was wisdom and she always took the side of the poor. There was not a single human condition that she did not identify with.

After twenty years missionaries came from the sea and began talking about one called Jesus who set the captives free and bound up the broken-hearted. The villagers insisted they knew this person and that she was living on the island. "Come," they said, "We will introduce you to the one you speak of." The missionaries were led to a hut and there was their fellow missionary whom they had thought long dead.

But what of us? Do we pass the integrity test? Does our community get what's written on our can? So many look on as spectators of the churches and judge us by what they see. They are looking desperately for integrity. Do we bring new life to our community?

Actually, to be honest, the more I thought about it the more I was convinced that we do. For 200 odd people we do totally amazing stuff. Here are just some of the things we do to bring life to others: Operation Christmas Hope - seventy parcels sent off to children in the third world. Our support of Reverend John is enabling the seafarers that arrive in Lyttelton to have better access to pastoral care and hospitality. For young parents suffering from nappy brain we offer *Mainly Music*. For new New Zealanders struggling to fit in there is the English class to offer friendship and growing confidence in another tongue. We support Petersgate Counselling Service right here on our land with money and with volunteers.

Over 7,000 people receive help through depression, relationship breakup and anxiety. Our beloved St Peter's church will be rebuilt this year and next. It is a beacon of hope proclaiming to our community held captive by consumerism that there is more to life than shopping. Our new pre-school will bring the good news to the very young and their families. Our youth group nurtures fine young people that I believe will be leaders in the future. The craft group make blankets for the homeless. The walking group provides exercise and companionship. Rest home services bring hope to the residents of seven homes. Keeping Good Company brings fun and meaning to many. And these are just a few examples. I'm sure you can think of other ways we bring hope and new life.

If anyone took the time to find out they would discover at St Peter's a caring community where the priorities of Jesus are ours too. By living lives of integrity, ourselves we do more than we can possibly imagine. For everything else we have CRC.