

Comfortably Numb....?

VISION

I see your true colours shining
I see your true colours shining through
I see your true colours, that's why I love you
So don't be afraid, to let them show
Your true colours, true colours,
Are beautiful, like a rainbow!!

He loves you because he loves you because he loves you because he loves you, because he can see your true colours, and your true colours are something worth loving.

Do you see your true colours friends? I can't answer that for you, I can only answer it for me. If I'm honest I struggle most of the time to see my true colours. I find it hard to think that my father in heaven could love me because he loves me.... cause' when I look at myself I don't see easily what he sees. I can more easily see a son who left home; I more easily see a son who doesn't want to do what he wants me to do; I more easily see a son who is in truth quite selfish; I more easily see a son who is more interested in me most of the time; I more easily see a son who looks at his life and wonders why my father hasn't really given me what I would like – not really. I see a son who would really prefer to be the master of my own destiny living how I want to live. I more easily see a son who finds it a whole lot easier to live without reference to anyone else making demands on my life. I see a son who feels often like saying: "Oh for goodness sake just let me be free." I more easily see a son who is in truth running away from what he knows are his true colours. How about you?

I struggle to see beyond the son who never really left home, but who finds it hard to live well in his father's house; I struggle to see beyond the thought that it's really not fair – I'm not sure how well I've been treated. And sometimes I see a son who finds it hard to see the goodness of a father who can seem distant. I'm a son who finds it hard to see beyond the resentments that I've allowed to build up, who finds himself asking of others – what about them? I'm a son who finds it

hard not to look with envy on other ministers whose churches appear better than this, whose preaching is more effective than mine, who have ministries that I think I would like. I'm a son who wrestles with the disappointment that being in ministry sometimes brings. I'm a son who will stand outside because he's learnt to protect himself and coming in means being vulnerable. I'm a son who often stomps off to the fields to escape and hide. How about you?

Most of the time I look at myself and find myself thinking: not much of a son am I?! And it's very easy for me to miss the beat of my father's heart: I love you because I love you because I love you because I love you, because I see your true colours. This is the heartbeat that beats through every second of every minute of every hour of everyday of my life. It is the beat that never stops, never grows tired or weary, never drifts away, never turns its attention from me and never falters. And it is the heartbeat that is my life, my true colours.

It beats when I'm living well in my father's house and then I hear it strong and true. It beats when I'm filled with bitterness, or envy, or pride, or jealousy or feelings of failure, or moments of despair or disappointment. It beats when I deliberately choose to hurt rather than love, when I choose to fight rather than to act in humility, because this heartbeat is not dependant on what I do – never ever dependant on what I do. It beats my true colours. It beats of a father's love. The beat that I so often don't hear, feel or see; the beat that I so often want to ignore; the beat that I find it so hard to embrace; the beat that I so often refuse to believe still goes on when I get ill or tired or life goes wrong. Despite my best efforts to pretend it is otherwise the father's heart beats my true colours. I am loved and special, unique and beautiful.

It is the heartbeat of a love that longs to embrace me. It is the love of a father who watches and waits. It is the love of a father who is big enough to take all I might dare to throw at him. It is a love that can love me no more tomorrow than it does today. It is a love that loved me no more yesterday than it does today. It is a love that loves me now as much as it ever has or ever will, and it is a love that is not changed by what I do or do not do, because it is a love that sees and knows my true colours.

If I want to, I can choose to be comfortably numb with all this, and I can stay as I am – and I know how to do that!! I'm very good at it because I've been practising

it for years. But if I do that I'll never change and I'll never fully live my true colours. To do that, I have to come home.

Friends, this whole series came about because I was challenged by a book I read about being a prodigal friendly church. The challenge it seemed to me, was how much are we a church that welcomes others? How much are we a church that really, truly lives the values of the Kingdom of God? Well.... How are we doing? Friends, this isn't about just what happens on Sundays, we are still the church Monday to Saturday!!! We are still the church at work, at home, at school or college, in our leisure time, in our hobbies, in our holiday time. The church goes wherever you go and the church meets whoever you meet. Who are you in all these places? How much do you live your true colours in all these places?

Our vision statement reads:

By 2015 we will naturally be radical followers of Christ: Caught up in him:
Enjoying each other: Transforming communities: And then some.....

In order to do that, we need to live our true colours. Now here's the point of all this.... we have to come home; we have to walk into the embrace of our loving heavenly father and live well in his house, and then we have to become the father. If we remain as one of the sons, we cannot fully live our true colours. Only when we open ourselves to our father's embrace is that possible, and as we open ourselves to his embrace so we become like him.

I want to be part of a church where its people are rooted and established in the love that is the heartbeat of the father; where its people know how wide and long and high and deep is the love of God. I want to be part of a church where people are growing in knowledge and depth of insight, but also in love. I want to be part of a church where relationships are open, honest and strong and that will hold us through even the most difficult and trying of times and circumstances. I want to be part of a church where people want to be part of a small group because they are living a dynamic and life changing. I want to be part of a church where coming together means something – where we are known and where we come to give to others.

I want to be part of a church that is honest enough to be balanced! I want to be part of a church that isn't demanding on time, but releasing. I want to be part of a church that wants to truly celebrate variety:

- To welcome others whatever our differences
- To see others as our father sees them
- To rejoice in the beauty of our fathers creation!
- To put aside preferences so that others might come home.

I want to be part of a church where competition is replaced by co-operation. I want to be part of a church full of people who want to give rather than those who only take. I want to be part of church where we are truly wholeheartedly together. I want to be part of a church full of little lights on a hill: a church that knows the truth that church isn't something that just happens on a Sunday ... but understands church is wherever you go. I want to be part of a church where people have real and deep friendships with people who are outside! I want to be part of a church that is big enough to say to its people: "don't come here – go there and let your life shine in the darkness." I want to be part of a church that exists for the sake of others.

How about you?

Friends, we can become and remain comfortably numb.... Or we can boldly and courageously and hopefully walk towards this vision. But in order to do that, we must first come in from the outside, and live in the embrace of our father. The good news is we don't have to be perfect. In fact we don't have to be anything other than who we are. As we accept his embrace and become more like him... so we will be more and more able to live this vision. As we begin to live this vision so we are together writing the end of this story that is bursting with life!

Friends, may you know the power and the presence of the father who loves you because he loves you because..... May you know the depth of his love for you and may you see his kingdom come as you walk with him.

AMEN