

**ASK AND APPRECIATE Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016**  
**An extract – Graham Hooke**

It's good to come to God to ask Him about things. It is expected of us that we should come and ask of God in prayer. Make Him your first port of call.

But my title is more than just Ask. It's Ask And Appreciate. Triple A – for reasons that you might guess – I'll explain in a moment.

**Here's another story.**

*Luke 17:11-19*

*<sup>11</sup> Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy <sup>a</sup> met him. They stood at a distance <sup>13</sup> and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"*

*<sup>14</sup> When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.*

*<sup>15</sup> One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. <sup>16</sup> He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him — and he was a Samaritan.*

*<sup>17</sup> Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? <sup>18</sup> Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup> Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."*

NIV

A bunch of lepers – I choose my words advisedly... excluded from the towns and villages – outcasts! One from Samaria (Jews hated Samaritans) bonded by disease not birthplace, they all come as near to Jesus as they dare - pleading for help.

Notice that He didn't heal them immediately. He gave them **something to do**, to go to the priest.

Often when we ask God about something He will give us something to do. Naaman the leper had to wash in the Jordan, not something he wanted to do. These lepers all had the faith to go to the priest who found them all healed. They had to move first! Faith has to act!

If you just wait for God to move on your behalf you'll probably wait forever. I know that God does say "wait" sometimes but that doesn't usually mean do nothing at all. (The disciples waiting for Pentecost kept meeting and praying.) Move, speak, respond – God can steer a moving ship not one moored at harbour. He can take the words of a tongue that is surrendered to Him, once you open your mouth!

But it's what happened next I want to focus on. One returned to Jesus!

He did two things:     He praised God for what had happened  
                                  He thanked Jesus for his role in his healing.

From the leper's perspective – this was a work of God but it was done through a man. He didn't know Jesus as we do, the Son of God.

Most of the works of God on earth are done through the hands, words and activity of our fellow human beings. So there is a persistent requirement for us to be people who praise God and thank people.

Jesus wanted to know where the rest of the lepers were. No thank yous from them! I wonder why? One in ten said thank you. Is that par for the course today? Isn't that a shocking statistic – one in ten!

This story makes it clear that ingratitude is a very common sin. It may be just one story – it implies a significant majority of people are likely to be ungrateful. It's difficult for me to speak about in church because the saying of this in itself feels ungrateful! You understand!? But it needs to be talked about!

I wonder how often we praise and thank God for what He has done for us? **How often do we thank people for their part in God's work?** Even just for what they do - full stop!?

Our culture is not conducive to this. We live in a cultural climate with a predisposition to find fault. It's the blame culture. When floods hit there's a media frenzy to blame someone for what insurance calls an "Act of God".

- Why weren't rivers dredged?
- Why weren't rivers slowed down?
- Why wasn't more money spent?

I suppose these are all important questions to ask but they do add emphasis to this ethos in Britain of – lets point the finger at someone, let's find someone to blame.

If you think that the church is immune to this, think again!

The blame culture is alive and well in churches across the land – including ours! We human beings find it easy to criticise and find fault. We're pretty good at it. We can give our best mental energy to finding ways to express disapproval, discontent, criticism, sarcasm, belittling, superiority... finding fault for things that we thought weren't up to standard.

Over Christmas I said to Ruth, "I wonder what difference a revolution in appreciation might make?" I think we need it. It could make a massive difference!"

**I think we need a radical revolution in appreciation.** Or to put it simply: We need to say a lot more thank yous!

Appreciation brings affirmation to people. What do you think is the number one cause of dissatisfaction in the work place? I remember being a teacher - it wasn't the pay. It was all the government initiatives that implied they didn't value us very highly, they didn't trust us. It seems to be similar in other professions – the medical profession currently. Of course there are genuine issues, but when these issues are addressed in a climate of not feeling valued, not being

appreciated, no genuine thank yous.... then there's nothing in the bank to draw on when difficult decisions have to be made.

When there is a lack of thank you, people feel unappreciated. **When people are not thanked for what they do they feel undervalued, taken for granted.**

So they're unlikely to say thank you in return; perpetuating an unhealthy climate of recrimination instead of a place of harmony and mutual appreciation. It doesn't feel good! It's a terribly sad state of affairs.

What can we do about it? Say thank you a whole lot more!!!! A Hundred times more! A radical revolution in being grateful and saying so!!!!

Countries that have a triple A credit rating are those who are reckoned to have sound finances. They are able to borrow at lower interest rates than those with only a single or double A rating.

Convert that idea from finance to people and organisations like church. If you build up a high credit rating through Ask And Appreciate then you will find it much easier to have people serve you well.

When you need something they'll be happy to oblige. You've got a good credit rating. When something does go wrong, they'll be much more willing to listen. But when we fail to appreciate people, we have much less credit in the bank and when we need them they are likely to be more reluctant to help us. When we complain they'll be resistant to us, at least wary of us! Why? Because they feel undervalued. They feel taken for granted. They may even feel abused. The hurt and pain builds up and pushes them over an edge.

### **Let's be more specific:**

When did you last thank your husband or wife (to be politically correct and avoid flak I have to avoid any stereotyping here so it is hard to be specific!!!) for the income they bring into the home, the jobs they do routinely to make the household function, the love and care they show? Basic things.

When did you last thank a work colleague, your boss, someone who works under you, for the time and effort they put in to their work?

When did you last thank a parent for the sacrifices they made for you? Whatever age you are.

In church – for those who have been coming a while to CCF – when did you last say thank you to the stewards at the door?

When did you last say to a worship leader or a musician, “thank you for giving your time and skill to lead us in worship?”

What about the guys doing the sound, the recording, the projection on Sunday? Just thank them without bringing a complaint. *(at this point everyone laughed – point well understood I think!)*

## **We get beaten up by fault-finding; we get built up by appreciation!**

When did you last thank a Calvary Kids teacher or youth leader for their work with our young people?

When did you last thank a Trustee or Elder or Pastor for their work behind the scenes that nobody sees?

When did you last say thank you to the preacher?

When did you last thank Billy, Karen, Jill or LJ for their work? Or the leaders of our groups?

When did leaders thank people just for showing up at something? Being present is a gift to be appreciated too. Thank you for coming today!

### **Why do we find this difficult. What stops us?**

1. We are truly ungrateful people. Let's take that on board. If we are not good at thanking people it's possibly because we are ungrateful people. Ouch!
2. We just don't think about it. We are neglectful.
3. We are too busy and we forget. No excuse but it's true.
4. We think it's unnecessary. They're paid to do that. Or she's just doing what she promised on our wedding day!
5. We have a blindspot about certain people. That may be because we've fallen out with them; **bitterness makes us blind**. Or just that some people are a bit scary,
6. We leave it to others.
7. We don't rate someone's work so we feel that a thank you would signify approval that we don't want to give. Actually it doesn't work like this in life. Just consider this – maybe their work is not as good as you'd like because you don't say thank you?
8. We think that the encouragement of thank you might be perceived as a form of manipulation. "Hey what are you after?!" My answer is - just do it! Most times you won't be after anything. Then on the one occasion you are – you've built up a triple A credit rating!

None of those are good reasons for being unappreciative.

### **What does being appreciative, grateful, encouraging do?**

It's much more powerful than we realise and it's absence can be disastrous. It strengthens relationships, it builds confidence and self-worth, it helps people feel valued and safe. It creates strong bonds so that people are much better able to deal with conflict and issues from a place of safety and well-being. It reinforces harmony and trust. It fosters all the good things we want in

family and community life and helps break down the negative stuff. It builds a triple A credit rating.

**Finally - it's not just about what people do – it's about who they are.**

When someone serves in any capacity, they are not just giving their skill, they are giving themselves, their lives. They are giving a part of their lives that can never be returned to them. That is precious.

“Thank you” values them, not just their skill, It values them as human beings for their part in your life.

We need to see this difference – it may be fairly nuanced but it is really important. It can make a world of difference to how people feel working and serving together.

**Back to letters** – maybe it's time to write another letter? A letter of thanks – for some of you that may be easier than saying it. Reveal your heart to someone in a thank you letter!

I began by reading that little bit of scrawly writing from my Dad, the last thing he ever wrote to me a month before he died last September. "PS Sorry, can't control writing very well! Thank you very much for what you have done and are doing."

My Dad's last written words to me were "Thank you"! And I only appreciated that at 9am this morning as I went through my final preparations for this talk! What an encouragement and confirmation from God of what He wants me to say to us today! AAA – Ask And Appreciate! Let's build up a triple A credit rating and make our world a much happier place!