
DEVOTION REFLECTION

The theme for this conference is, “A time to Sow, A time to grow”. The question is, what does this theme mean to you, to us as a Conference, and a Church within Aotearoa?

Before I continue, lets take a look at this video clip. (*Play Video Clip*)

The video clip ends with a challenge statement, “Unless someone like you cares, a whole awful lot, nothing, is going to get better. It’s not.

Question is: Cares for and about what, in particular??

The conference theme, highlights the same challenge, “A time to sow, A time to Grow”

When this theme and statement are woven together, it formulates a new challenge for us today, “Unless someone like you and I care a whole awful lot, to sow that seed, nothing is going to get better Its not”.

Nothing is going to grow within Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa. Let alone our future generation who will reap nothing.

This challenge provides a robust debate, about the environment, sustainability, survival and priority. Four important points, I want us to reflect on, to start our day.

1. Sowing and Reaping: This reminds us of the law of nature, you reap what you sow.

Certain past events affect the present and the future. The decisions we make today affect tomorrow because our actions and decisions today, will shape the future. What can stop us from going any further, if we do not act, plant and sow accordingly TODAY!

This is the regret that the Once-ler confided in the young boy Ted, in the video clip, “I wish, I wish, I had listened to him”. Why? Why regret now? Because now he reaped what he had sowed?

He reaped when his ego took control of him, and the worst thing is, it is not only him that suffers and misses the opportunity, but the whole community of Thneedville, and all the creatures that depend and share that colourful valley.

His selfishness, denied the young boy the opportunity to witness, the greatness of God through His creation, Trees.

That reminds me, that when we make a conscious decision to plant a garden in our backyard, the connection between the care you give to the plants, and the results you receive is obvious. However, we make countless unconscious decisions every day.

For this reason, we need to be aware of our actions, and sow only what we wish to reap.

2. Survival: Although the clip focuses on the environment, the seed and the need for trees, this also reflects on our faith and beliefs.

DEVOTION REFLECTION

If we don't nurture the generations to follow, there will come a time, when people will need to search for ways to keep the gospel alive or survive.

The Once-ler arrived at the valley flourished and colorful, but his vision, philosophy, theology were compromised by his greed, which changed the whole valley and his surrounding, from its colorful scene and growth, into a dark neglected space.

Neglecting the importance and the existences of other species, who share the same environment, makes everybody turn their back on the Once-ler, to look for a better environment elsewhere.

3. Deeds and Responsibility: What is the burning issue and who is responsible and involved? What holds us back from growing? How can we nurture, what we have planted today? To answer all these questions "We are" we are all responsible, we are all involved, and we are all part of the solution!

Like this young lad, Ted Wiggins in the story, he was determined, enthusiastic, and he didn't give up, even though he wasn't allowed to plant anything. He believed that the only way to change people's mindset, and accept his mission, is to plant that seed.

Let the people see that seeds grow to become a beautiful tree. He was also determined, to make sure that the seed was well looked after, because it was the only chance for survival.

But before he planted that seed, he went through a lot of challenges and obstacles, because people were afraid to challenge their comfort zone. People were so afraid and uncomfortable, to think outside the square.

That is why he knocked down that city wall with the bulldozer, and let the entire community see for themselves, the result of being irresponsible. The result of what they will reap, if they do not act now.

There is no one solution for an issue: People have different opinions, based on their beliefs and values. Some value money over trees, other value environment over money, but we value the Gospel, we value humanity, we value Gods creation, and everything in it!

So as stewards of God's creation and church, it is our responsibility to care for its survival, in a challenging world.

If it only took one little boy, to change the community's way of thinking, their mindset and lifestyle – How can we model that?

Are we willing to be agents of change? What does that mean for you and me?

4. Cause and Effect: There is something very pleasing about spending time in the garden planting, and then throughout the year, watching it blossom and grow. Watching children becoming Teenagers, then maturing into Adults.

DEVOTION REFLECTION

The constant changes, and the external and internal influences, that have helped mould oneself. Growth from new understanding, knowledge and experience, be it outside of one's comfort zone or global...the reality is that time is everything.

Growth is a sign of blessings of what you sow. Growth is a sign of God's presence, within what we sow, for the future of the church.

That is the admiration behind the whole process of sowing and growing. It is the presence of God that motivates, encourages and inspires His people to sow the seed of righteousness, with every action and decision we make.

And for his people to witness, the growth of Gods Will within generations to come.

Conclusion:

To conclude, according to the conference theme, Time is valuable. Time is crucial. Time is a contributing factor to growth. Time stops for no one. Time is significant.

Now is the time to sow, if we want a vibrant church in the future. If we want to pass on a healthy church, to our next generation. Now is the time to sow.

The present or now, are valuable times, as it divides the past from the future.

Unless someone like you and me cares a whole awful lot, to sow and plant that seed, nothing is going to get better. Conference, nothing is going to grow, because we only reap, what we sow.

Prayer: Let us pray!

Loving God, we thank you for bringing us together this morning safe and well. We give thanks for the leaders of this conference, for giving us this opportunity and time of devotion to you.

We ask for your guidance throughout the time we are here. So we may be able to share, deliberate, and work towards the future of our Church, Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa.

May you bless us with the wisdom and knowledge, to overcome challenges that we may face. Give us strength to work through hard decisions and with humble hearts the stillness, to hear your voice and Will.

Give us the confidence, to sow and plant today, seeds that will solidify your Will in our lives, so that the generations to come, will reap a plentiful harvest.

We ask for your Holy Spirit, to guide us throughout this day, and stir within us the passion to continue your work for your glory alone.

In the mighty name of Jesus we pray
Amen