
Designed to keep the word of God fresh in our hearts and minds, please enjoy the following summary of the 6.30pm service on the 3rd of October 2021. If you would like to listen to the full sermon visit stnics.org/talks or search 'St. Nic's Nottingham' on Spotify.

Theme: Healing the city

Speaker: Steve

Happy new month! As we draw to the end of the '**Refreshing the vision**' sermon series we might reflect on the values we prioritise as a church: Loving God, Making disciples and Seeking the Kingdom.

Our main readings this past Sunday were:

Acts 16:11-40

Philippians 3:17-21

First things first, stop all distractions and be ready for the word of God.

Is healing the city a reasonable aspiration for the Church?

So many areas around us need healing. The economic system, families and the city. We have an economy dependent on alcohol abuse.

Video on 'How Wolves Change Rivers' - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSBL7Gk_9QU

In the frame of a big plan, power or manpower, if wolves can change the park by simply being wolves then God can change society by Christians just being Christians. Granted, this is an imperfect analogy because we are not top predators but the essence of it is not lost.

We all know or are people who love God and don't know Him intimately. There's something more people are seeking, and that something more comes through loving Jesus. Maybe those who love God are waiting for our invitation to places where they can know God more intimately. Pray for your friends who love God and seek to draw closer to God. You might meet people in your workplace who are open to your influence. When we think about sharing faith we think about individuals but God often operates in groups. So invite those individuals to bring others who are seeking more. Paul is filled with affection and Lydia experiences healing. Coming to Christ isn't a mathematical equation where $x=y$, there is healing. The woman was oppressed spiritually and economically and she was healed!

Ornamental Thistles

There is no such thing as an ornamental thistle... For a bit of context, Steve and Jane were gifted an ornamental thistle when they moved into their house and after some time in the garden it multiplied and quickly took over! It's 'just' an ornamental thistle until it begins to control you and is a place of addiction. If you have one in your life, pull it out right now. Stand up, and pull it out. Sarah Everard's killer's ornamental thistle was pornography and when the judge sentenced him he rightly told him he had betrayed his family.

How is healing happening by Christians being Christians?

Healing happens when we keep loving God, finding others who love God, making disciples by opening our homes up to worship with others and seeking first the Kingdom of God.

Seeking the Kingdom spreads all over the known world. In the 14th century the Roman emperor declared himself a Christian and Christianity became the known religion of the Roman Empire. God might be looking for people today who will love Him. People whose lives are so attractive in Christ that other people want to be like them. God's strategy is to release us to be real Christians.

By just being Christians, Paul helps the jailer as he seeks salvation. I think there is something really special about how the other prisoners were listening to Paul and Silas praying and singing hymns to God before the violent earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison. It's interesting that foundations shook and the jailer seeks salvation after he had just tried to commit suicide. *The jailer seeks salvation?* Does this seem a little like a plot twist? The man becomes a believer because Paul tells him to believe and he will be saved.

When you heal the city, you take on Jesus as Lord, you don't take one thing and leave anything out. You take Jesus on as Lord. The impact on the jailer's household had he committed suicide would have been devastating. Receiving Christ changes entire generations. Families torn by violence and alcohol abuse can be changed by just one person becoming a Christian. We see these stories of faith alive today in our church. God is in the business of changing key individuals so that entire family lines may be changed.

Is there a history that needs to be undone in your family? Is there an ornamental thistle in your life that will destroy you? God wants to get rid of those and free you.

Finally, God might be calling you to heal the city and make disciples.

N.B. Following any of the services, if you would like to share a personal reflection, encouragement or any way God is moving in your life in relation to the theme, please get in touch with realeboga@stnics.org!