

SALT CO.
01/14/2024

What's Your Story?
"Signals of Transcendence"

"This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths lying in a manger."

Luke 2:12

"Wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we have observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.'"

Matthew 2:1-2

"The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed."

Exodus 3:2

WELCOME TO THE SALT CO!

When we say "Seasoned Adults" we mean this in two ways:

SEASONED AS IN...

Chronologically-- we've lived a lot of seasons of life
 BUT more importantly-

Spiritually--- by the grace of God, when we receive Christ into our lives we become like THIS [gesture: one hand—two hands—joined together]

...we become a new creation...transformed and *transforming* for the rest of our lives.

JESUS CALLS US THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

So, we call this the SALT CO...

Introduce theme for the next three SALT CO's: What's Your Story?

1. Detecting the "signals of transcendence" in your story, where "transcendence" means beyond our "normal" or physical lives.
2. The Four Steps to telling your story well (modelling Jesus' parables)
3. One man's story- Bill Redell

But first let's get warmed up with some singing. Brand new papa Marcus who today is also celebrating hi 30th birthday! Let's sing...

Last week the Church celebrated Epiphany remembering the story of the Magi – most likely Seasoned Adults- who detected a "signal of transcendence" and chose to pursue that signal wherever it might lead. We know how this went and the transformation that resulted in their lives *because*- and here's the point- they *heeded* that signal.

Meet thought leader, Seasoned Adult Os Guinness- author of 30 books on Christian faith and life and how we relate to the ever-changing culture all around us. This last year he wrote a little book with the title, Signals of Transcendence.

<https://www.amazon.com/Signals-Transcendence-Listening-Promptings-Life/dp/1514004399>

He proposes that at some point in our lives, we may experience particular moments that prompt us to search for something deeper- "signals of transcendence" that awaken us to unseen realities.

Os Guinness tells stories of people who experienced these signals of transcendence and followed them to find new meaning and purpose in life at every age and stage of life. He describes notables such as Leo Tolstoy and C. S. Lewis as well as lesser-known individuals who experienced a variety of promptings that signaled to them that life could not continue as they had thought.

Guinness believes the same can be true for us, should we have the courage to follow the signals wherever they may lead.”

His concise description of Signals of Transcendence goes like this:

“Arresting and intriguing experiences that both capture our attention and call for further explanation” (p. 1)

-These may be what led some to giving their lives to Jesus. They also may be what lead us to take a step in a new direction with our walk with Jesus

-As I read I began to flash on my own experiences of this: My boyhood experience reading Matthew in front of my space heater, the impact like signal as I read the final verse.

“Throw it away and follow Me...”

Guinness lays out some of the characteristics of these “Signals of Transcendence”. I’ve boiled them down to eight:

EIGHT CHARACTERISTICS OF SIGNALS OF TRANSCENDENCE

1. They point to meaning beyond themselves- won’t leave us alone, they “puncture our satisfaction with the status quo and push us to search for something beyond.”

-They call into question the past, the present, the future by challenging the temptation to settle and be satisfied; they instill restlessness.

Maybe it was a book you read, a movie you watched, a conversation in which someone said something that you can't get out of your mind. A scene that draws you (what is it about breath taking beauty in creation that stirs us?)

- a. Me reading N.T. Wright's The Resurrection of God and his conclusion that the best explanation for what the NT claims to have happened is what the NT claims to have happened.
 - b. Have you seen Babette's Feast?
2. We feel vulnerable. These signals lay bare some aspect of our human existence that we have forgotten or suppressed, at least partially.
 - a. Me at Taize hearing the German woman's words, *"They come to have an encounter with the risen Christ..."*
3. These signals/signs send us on a quest for meaning that is more adequate and faith that is true. Like the Magi, or the Shepherds out in the field (!), follow the signals and discover more of the reality of who we are and what the universe and life are about.
 - a. Notice the root of the word "question" is "quest". A good question sends us on a journey...
4. The signals only signal, they *do not* in themselves deliver the satisfaction of discoveries.
 - a. I think of Jesus' parables, told in order to intrigue, create/evoke curiosity, to "leaning in", to following in order to discover who Jesus is, what He has in mind. Some heard his stories, shrugged their shoulders and walked away saying, *"Interesting, but I got things to do..."*
 - b. What if Moses had NOT turned aside to see this strange occurrence?!

5. These signals of transcendence are nearly universal. Many remain quiet about them. I submit we are God is constantly engaging us because He is full of joy and love for us. We are continually being addressed.
 - a. Miriam coming to see me... Pearl and the tomato.
 - b. Olga's story
6. We are trained to rule out, to dismiss the significance of the signals. We can rack them up to "indigestion".
 - a. Guinness riffs on the effects of minimizing intuition [FIND A QUOTE]
 - b. Jesus with Nicodemus who cannot understand what He means by being born "again" (from above).
 - c. Pharisees and Sanhedrin outrage at Jesus' claim to rebuild the temple in "three days".
 - d. Guinness talks about "weapons of mass distraction" because we *want* to be "distracted" to avoid facing our own mortality. What do you think distracts you? Obvious stuff like our technology. But what else?
7. Are we open to His signals? How have we responded?

"The true test of wisdom and the best way to lead a life of creative thinking is the ability to ask the right question, to keep asking the right question, and always be prepared to go beyond what we know now, in order to discover something new." (p. 7)

- a. Signaling to show us who we are called to be as R,P, G's.
8. Each "signal" is individual and personal- mine are different than yours. What we can do is wonder together, listen, learn, encourage one another to pursue, seek, and find! (this segues to TABLE TALK).

TABLE TALK

1. Share your name and a highlight of your Christmas/New Year.
 - a. Maybe you got a “signal” this past month...
2. Share what seems to you to have been a “signal of transcendence” for you. What learnings have resulted?
 - a. about God, yourself, the world, your purpose, etc.
3. What do you think distracts you from these signals?

Guinness suggests that the “ultimate signal of transcendence” happened when Moses encountered the burning bush. Let him serve as an example to us (He “turned aside”. From seeing to seeking. “Here I am”= readiness.)

-Moses is a shepherd. Long, slow, hot days of routine (40 years!) in the Sinai where he is learning long, slow, hot lessons.

-Moved to Horeb where he encountered a “signal”- a bush on fire yet not consumed

-Moses chooses to go see, “I will go over and see this strange sight” (curious, if fearful wonder is stronger)

-Leads to a conversation, and his calling

Think of Jesus’ followers after His resurrection, their minds were blown open! Think about Peter, James and John on the mountain where Jesus shown like starlight with Moses and Elijah.

Getting older is a biological process. Aging is a spiritual process. Eldering as increasing in curiosity. Is there more? *Always*.

Makes sense how the apostle prays in Eph. 3:20 (also in ch. 1 for the “eyes of our hearts to be enlightened”), that we (we are included in his prayer!) be able to “comprehend what is the height, depth, breadth and length (of what he does not specify!) and to know the love of Christ

that surpasses knowledge. *Is this prayer not to encourage us to pursue the signals we get along the way?*

Watch this video (which really offers the biblical theology of these “signals of transcendence”= eternal life NOW.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/eternal-life/> (5:31)

The word “revelation” APOCALYPSIS means to “pull back the curtain” in order to see what is behind...

Reflect on the “curtain” that “ripples” creating these signals, glimpses, “zen views”. Scripture tells us that heaven is “open”. He is with us here and now. We find ourselves in “thin places”.

These “signals of transcendence” are in fact shimmerings of the curtain allowing glimpses, hints, “signals” of the life God has for any who will turn to see and go after. Those who seek will find.

Maybe we can put it like this, because of His presence with us today every bush is burning...