**LUKE 4 V 16-21 EYNSFORD 20-10-19 FREEDM SUNDAY**

I would like to start with a little quiz. I am going to say a few slogans or statements, I just want you to tell me who said them. There is no million pound prize though. Who said:-

Workers of the world unite? Karl Marx

Never had it so good? Harold MacMillan 1957

Britain deserves better? Labour 1997

Change we can believe in? Barak Obama

We shall be free? Garth Brooks on an album in 1992, relating to the "I will overcome" speech made by Martin Luther King Jnr.

These were the particular slogans and statements of these groups at that time. It gives us an idea of what they stand for, it's the agenda behind which they want us to unite.

If you want to know what Jesus stood for, if you want to know the agenda and priorities by which he wants the church to unite, then I believe that our Gospel passage this morning is one of the fundamentals to that question.

It comes at the beginning of his ministry. This was Jesus in his own words setting out his missionary manifesto.

To bring good news to the poor.

To proclaim release of the captives.

Bring sight to the blind.

To let the oppressed go free.

Who said:- " You can choose to look the other way but never again can you say that you never knew" William Wilberforce, when speaking out for the abolition of the slave trade.

Friday was Freedom day, promoting awareness of the modern day slave trade, today is the end of Freedom Week.

There are an estimated 40.3 million folk worldwide caught up in Modern Day Slavery in 2016, and if you listen to the news it's getting mentioned more and more. It is difficult to estimate how many victims there are in the UK but the last estimate was about 136,000 . It's a high profit, low risk crime. The victims will not always admit they are being used in slavery as they are threatened with violence or deportation, and just being treated as an illegal immigrant.

Where have we gone wrong, why are the oppressed not going free? The captives not being released? And the poor and vulnerable not hearing the Good news?

 Are we the one blind that needs sight brought too them?

Slavery exists in every country in the world, and in every county in England. In Kent they are hidden in some car washes, nail bars, farms and construction sites. They are kept in domestic servitude or forced to grow cannabis or beg on the streets. There are children as young as 9 who are exploited to carry drugs. According to the Met Police. Sevenoaks is a hub for this type of exploitation, which now comes under what is called County Lines.

This is where gangs groom young people in urban areas such as London or Liverpool, Manchester or Birmingham. They then force them to sell drugs in county towns like Sevenoaks and Gravesend or seaside towns like Dover and Margate.

Why do people get drawn in to the slave trade.

Jean is going to read a genuine letter sent to someone who was vulnerable and got drawn into the slave industry.

RESOURCE 2: LETTER TO READ OUT

Dear Mary, I am very pleased to tell you that we have found a perfect job for you. It is in a different country, so you can travel and see the world. Because you have experience babysitting we have found a family who need help with their four children, aged 7, 5, 3 and 18 months old. They will provide you a room of your own, with a bed and regular food. You will be able to send money home, and to help pay for your little brother go to school, so he can get a good job and support your mother when she is old and not able to work. Please meet us at the bus station next Sunday at 8am, and just bring one small case. We will provide travel papers for you using the photograph you gave us last month. The cost of the air fare and other travel can be paid back to us month by month from your excellent wages. Do not be late, this is the one chance for you. Don’t worry about being homesick, the family will be so kind you won’t miss home at all. Bob, your friendly cousin

What a lovely, caring cousin Bob was. Not true. Bob was part of the slave trade industry, was put into domestic servitude, given very little food and hardly any money. Her minders kept upping the amount she owed so was never out of debt and never would be. She was encouraged not to learn English or speak to anyone, or she would be beaten and dealt with.

There is a Challenge for Us.

 God grants justice to those who call out - this is the message of this Gospel. He does this by empowering the oppressed to call out, and by touching the hearts of the powerful to hear and respond. In our world today we have a moment of opportunity to be priests and mediators of this desperate human praying. We can teach ourselves to hear the Hidden Voices of the exploited and excluded of our own times - those in Modern Slavery being the most abused and vulnerable – and say we see you to those society has turned away from. We can try to practice justice in our own dealings as consumers of services and ask the questions we have been encouraged to silence. More, we can play a key role in amplifying these Hidden Voices so that their prayers are better heard by those in power - in government, business, law enforcement, church and voluntary organisations, the media, and our own workplaces and community groups. Do Something Now!

It's very difficult in 10 minutes or so to share with you how deep and serious Modern Day Slavery is in our towns and villages. We can only try to make you aware and get you speaking to others. You may not know anyone caught up in Slavery, but if we don't share what is happening, then no one will. We need to be open to the realisation that it is happening and talk to folk we know about it.

 You should all have been given a card titled 'We see you'. The Clewer Initiative has produced materials to enable all kinds of communities to learn about listening to and responding alongside the Hidden Voices. Discerning the vulnerable of our time and becoming agents of that ‘praying always’ that brings empowerment to the vulnerable, and a readjustment of perspective and practice to those in places of power. Visit the website, download the Safe Car Wash app that they promote, take a look at their website, and take the vulnerable seriously! When the Son of Man comes, will He find such faith on earth?

**let us pray**

Heavenly Father, who sees the unseen and notices the unnoticed, help each of us to hear the Hidden Voices of those who pray for release from slavery and exploitation, so that we may give ourselves more fully to the service of your saving love, and be strengthened together as agents of your healing and hope, through Jesus Christ, who himself came to serve as a slave, so as to bring freedom and grace to all. Amen