

Holy Trinity Hampton: Sermon 21/7/13: John Phillips

Gospel Reading: Luke 4:16-21

In spite of what the populist and selective media would say, the world is full of good news and a growing consciousness in rhythm with the presence, power, and love of the one true and living God. There is evidence and signs of grace everywhere, for those with the eyes to see, the ears to hear, and the spirit to seek. One of those signs must surely be the growing army worldwide of those courageous men and women who have become known as social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurs are known as such because their primary concern is always social; meaning people, families, and communities, all other life forms and the environment, and the issues that influence their health, well-being and potential. They are entrepreneurs because they are creative thinkers, innovators, and agents of change. They are people who have grown tired of the old established systems because they continue to fail and exclude too many people. They are inflexible, narrowly focussed and inappropriate to meet the complex needs of the contemporary world.

Social entrepreneur's don't stand back waving banners and keep bleating about injustice, they have no time to waste. Believing in the connectedness of all life and the need for global healing and restoration, they involve themselves in direct action that generates a paradigm shift in the way a societal need is met. Let me cite a few examples. *One Nicholas Negroponte is chairman of the One Laptop per Child Quest. Describing the laptop as a window into the world and a tool with which to think, his goal was to produce a basic no frills laptop at minimum cost for distribution to the world's poorest communities. Co-opting the more compassionate in the industry, plus expertise among colleagues and the support of other stake holders, a laptop was produced for \$150 US, however, following the shipping of 50 million laptops around the world by the end of 2009, the cost had dropped to \$100 per unit. *Following some volunteer work in downtown Washington one Kyle Zimmer was broken hearted to discover that in the poorest African American and Latino communities' children had no books to read. Finding initial funding from various sources Kyle began the 'First Book' company. He purchased selected

classics and customised reprints in carton quantities on a non-returnable basis. The price per book averages \$1.80 (incl. shipping) representing a 75cent margin for First Book. Within two years over half a million books had been distributed to more than 800 community programs. Kyle says, "Publishers are happy not to have return books but the real impact is in the hearts and minds of children."*The Aravind Eye Care System offers an intriguing hybrid model of doing business that has even proved viable in the US. Dr. Venkat and his team, based in India, turned an eleven bed eye clinic into one of the largest and most productive eye care facilities in the world. Taking its services to the doorstep of rural India, the Aravind Eye Care System has become self-sustaining, treating over 2 million patients per year for free or with a steep subsidy, and still managing to turn a profit that it reinvests in growing and upgrading the enterprise. Like his hero Ghandi, Dr. Venkat refused to accept that the future would be a straight line extension of current reality. *Then there is Andrea and Barry Coleman. After a life changing experience in Africa, the Coleman's woke up to the fact that while it takes only a few hours to reach cities around the world by plane, it can take days and many hardships to reach developing countries more rural areas. Because the Coleman's met through their mutual love of motorcycle racing, the tools that were most readily available to their hands were motorcycles. So they started raising funds for 'Save the Children' and started a vehicle management program in the country of Lesotho. In 1996 they launched 'Riders for Health' and now have 900 bikes reaching 11 million people with regular, reliable health care, defying the unforgiving terrain of rural Africa. Isn't it great to hear some good news!

Social Entrepreneurs are a diverse bunch, creating new forms of business for new markets, yet, they all adhere to a few basic principles. The focus must be a social need. No one must be exploited in the process. All employees must be satisfied with a modest liveable salary, no hierarchical structures, privileges, or bonuses. Any profit realised gets ploughed back into the business. Now this may all sound a little crazy and unreasonable, but then most people eventually thought Jesus was crazy and unreasonable. Of all the names afforded to Jesus, Son of God, Son of Man, Lord, Messiah, Saviour, perhaps we could also call him the very first social entrepreneur! As he announces the core of his long awaited mission he speaks of the poor, the broken, the oppressed, and the disenfranchised. And why is this when we know that Gods love and favour is

for all people? Because they are the evidence of our failed societies and systems, they represent our breach with God's purpose that we all may be one as God is one, that we be holy as God is holy. The poor and oppressed are constant witnesses that the spiritual health of the human race is still at risk, and there is much yet to be done. Our time calls for much faith and courage, may each of us be blessed with the strength and wisdom to make a difference.