Part 4 - ARE YOU PREPARED TO EMBRACE THE MESS?

BIG QUESTIONS FOR THIS SERIES
- Is Christianity supposed to keep us SAFE or are we intended to be DANGEROUS?
- Spend all our energy AVOIDING doing anything WRONG or stepping out to do something RIGHT?
- SURVIVING or THRIVING?
- HANGING IN there or GETTING OUT there?
- Was the Christianity Jesus & His disciples modelled SAFE?

What do we mean by ‘Embrace the Mess’?
Read together Luke 5:12-13. This is about SO MUCH MORE than a miraculous healing
- Jesus was RESTORING His radical kingdom (sin can be forgiven)
- Jesus’ radical LOVE OVERTURNEO LAW (and willingness to take risks in faith) ...
  overcame the separation of law and fear that would have kept the leper separate.
  See Leviticus 13:45-46, and also Leviticus 14 - the separation was severe
- Jesus showed us an example of NOT FEARING ‘the mess’ - but being willing to see BEYOND IT to the child of God beneath. Overcoming separation through love and healing.
  → As we reflect on this story - what does it bring to mind in our own lives and experience today? Where do we see people separated from the body of Christ due to judgement / difference / fear and misunderstanding? What about within the church also, where does fear of difference and fear of mess hold us back from taking a risk in Jesus and embracing something new?

Is it possible that our Christian lives (theology, ecclesiology) SLIP-SLIDE into becoming about our COMFORT, PREFERENCES, PRIORITIES & in doing so we ...
- Miss the chance to INCLUDE OTHERS in His radical kingdom?
- Miss the chance to see 'NORMAL' GET CHANGED?
- Miss the chance for EXCITING ADVENTURES?
  → What holds us back? Are we concerned that THEY'RE TOO MUCH of a mess for me?
  I'M TOO MUCH of a mess to be welcome or this SITUATION is too much of a mess and I can't handle it?

HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE PROMISE
Do we realise we NEVER STEP OUT IN FAITH ALONE? Although at times embracing the mess can feel scary, GOD IS WITH US.
- Phil 4:13 ... I can do ALL THINGS through Christ
- Phil 4:6-7 ... the PEACE OF GOD which transcends all understanding
- 2 Cor 1:3-4 ... the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles - so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort WE RECEIVE from God
- John 17:22-23... I have given them THE GLORY that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one - I in them and you in me...
- John 6,8,10,11,14,15 ... The I AM statements of Jesus
  → Ask ourselves honestly - how much is the truth of His promise at the front of our mind when we step into the messy situations? Or how much do we tend to dive in 'head first' and remember what Jesus said when we run out of our own strength?
  → Would it be different if we grabbed hold of Jesus promises a bit stronger - and let it inspire us to leap forward - full of faith?
  → What situations are you facing now, either for yourself or for someone you feel GOD is leading you to where it would help to remember HIS PROMISE?

EMBRACING THE MESS CAN BRING EXCITING RESULTS
The Bible is crammed full of amazing examples of taking a risk, stepping out in faith, embracing the mess - and trusting the word of God. HEBREWS 11 - ‘Faith in Action’
- Genesis 22 - Abraham & Isaac - faith to be obedient, even if it meant a significant sacrifice. From this obedience God brought forward Israel
- Joshua 2 - The Israelite spies and Rahab the prostitute. Rahab was willing to embrace the risk because she saw the power of God in Israel. The spies were willing to look beyond who Rahab was because they saw her faith. They were saved - and Rahab became part of Jesus’ bloodline.
  → What other miracles can we read in Hebrews 11, and throughout the gospels where it required a leap of faith, a willingness to take a risk, a messy situation - in order to see GOD set things right, and CHANGE what was normal?
  → Why is it so important to embrace the mess IN GOD’S STRENGTH, rather than ours? What are the dangers of us getting into messy situations on our own?

EXCITING CHALLENGE: Will we TRUST God or play it SAFE?
- Are we prepared to STEP OUT in faith, even if it means taking a risk?
- Are we willing to let GOD WORK THROUGH US, rather than try to battle on alone?
- Are we up for EMBRACING A BIT OF MESS, or would we rather stick with what’s ‘comfortable’?
- Are we prepared to PRESS INTO THE FULNESS of what God has for us AND those we meet, even if that means taking a risk?
- What MIRACULOUS PROVISION might we miss if we don’t step out?
- Do we want the PROMISED LAND, and His RADICAL KINGDOM?