

Heart for the Poor March 30 2010 Being prepared for the Kingdom

Once a year the Hauraki Gulf Islands of Motutapu and Rangitoto linked by a narrow causeway are opened up to cyclists, walkers and runners for an event called the Dual Traverse. Excited I showed up to register knowing I was at the right place, the right time, and on the right date, but I was a month early! Returning last week, the young fit things at the desk looked at me and gave me the number 609, I am sure it was so it could be read when I was upside down in a ditch. Saturday was the day. We wound our way up the hills out of Home Bay in a huge bunch with frequent pile ups as the fitter and more confident sought to get ahead.

It didn't take long before I passed a number of entrants broken down on the side of the track, "that could never happen to me" I thought. But while erratically navigating the steep rocky path down off the summit of Rangitoto I got a flat tyre. HmMMM, after a kind soul gave me a pump, and another angel provided an inner tube, eventually I was underway. 200 metres further on my chain fell off! More angels appeared, one gifting a chain link and another, the use of a chain breaker. Talk about not being prepared!

But how prepared should one be in life, it comes down to what we can afford and what we are prepared to sacrifice to be sure we will be ok in the future. But what of our preparedness to face God when we have to give an account for our time here on planet Earth? Moving on from the debates over grace and or works, and even that we know our God is a loving God, how much is enough when preparing to meet our maker? The parable of the Virgins and the Lamps is to the point; Jesus said those without the oil missed out.

We will never know on this side of glory exactly what is required. The Pharisees spent a lot of time splitting hairs trying to work this out. It must be a guy thing, we like lists don't we? Do this, do that, and you know where you stand. But somehow I am not sure if God works quite like that. So what is the answer then? Well, we do know that some things are very special to God as he gives so much space to them in the Bible. One of those things is his heart for the poor. I am not saying here that this is the only answer to assured salvation, but if we had to invest energy and time in something that might improve the odds, it might help. The bonus is that in doing it well, the lives of many who are suffering malnutrition, oppression, fear and illness could well end up in a better space.

As we prepare for Easter, we might ask the question, are we as prepared as Jesus was when he faced the cross. What would it take? What have we already invested in the Kingdom? At TEAR Fund we have chosen to invest in the work of Saahasee this Easter because we know they are helping widows and the orphans (being dear to the heart of God) who live in slums of Mumbai India. The worst that could have happened to me not adequately preparing for Saturdays ride was a long walk pushing my bike looking foolish. But when calamity befalls the Mumbai slum dwellers, being prepared can mean the difference between life and death.

Prayer: Father God, you prepared a beautiful planet for us with more than we could need for a full and abundant life. Thank you for that. You have given some the privilege of being able to direct resources to where they are most needed. Inspire us in ways this Easter we can give a hope and a future to those who for what ever reason are denied access to your provision. Amen.

Richard Barter