

To Be or Not To Be...

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled"

-- Matthew 5:6

At this stage in our journey through 2014 there is one thing (in particular) that we must not lose sight of... the fact that this entire year is geared towards greater intentionality in giving daily expression to our faith. To that end, our Sunday focus (on which our weekly "padkos" devotion is based) over the course of the next few months will be quite deliberately centred around the Sermon on the Mount, which is recorded for us in Matthew 5-7. We will be working our way through these three chapters of Matthew's Gospel with the intention of hearing afresh the words of Jesus' preaching – so that these words, whether they be challenging or comforting or moving or even shocking, might inspire us to give greater intentional expression to the faith we profess.

As our first stop along this journey through Matthew 5-7 we reflected on the simple question of whether or not we are ready and willing to truly be Christians in a way that is worthy of the name. Are we ready and willing to hunger and thirst for righteousness, as Jesus put it? Are we ready for the kind of righteousness that comes from following him more intentionally? Because with this righteousness, with this greater intentionality, comes a price.

The story is told of Alexander the Great, who once sat in judgment over a soldier in his forces who had stolen rations of food from other soldiers. When Alexander asked the soldier for his name the soldier replied, "my name is Alexander". After a brief pause the great emperor asked the soldier again, "What is your name?" the soldier replied, "my name is Alexander." A longer silence followed, after which the emperor asked him one more time, "What is your name, soldier?" The soldier replied once more, "My name is Alexander." The great emperor stood up from his seat, looked the soldier in the eye, and said: "Either change your behaviour or change your name."

If we want to become more intentional about our faith, if we are truly ready to hunger and thirst for righteousness, then we must hear these words as though they are spoken by Jesus to each one of us... Either we change our name from 'Christian' to something else, or we change our behaviour so that it would become a better reflection of the name we bear.