



WHAT IF ?

I've been thinking about our shared experience together here in Victoria, facing these last few weeks of Stage 4, raising the uncertainty of what has already been a very uncertain year for many. For me in particular these last few weeks have been very different to what I am used to, and there still remains a great deal of uncertainty, something I also see reflected in many around the world at this time.

I've particularly noticed how others have chosen to respond during this time. The panic bulk-buying indicated by some psychologists as a way of attempting to gain some control back, when seemingly everything else is out of control. Some people talking about it almost daily with everyone as they share what they are going through or an experience on how they have been directly impacted. At the same time others are so overwhelmed with the constant barrage of media and conversation on the one topic that they've just had to switch off and try to carry on. And then I've also been fascinated to hear there are those who have deeply appreciated the extra time and quiet space, and remarked on how this forced, restricted time has been a great blessing to them.

This situation has been something that just suddenly happened, with each responding differently. It has changed and will continue to change our world.

This concept, this idea of suddenly being made to face a new norm, made me wonder if there were parallel feelings for the early Christians after Jesus died. In Gospels and book of Acts you can feel a great sense of loss, and confusion, and uncertainty about the future. Some were scared, some tried their best just to carry on, and everything was all a bit up in the air as to what the future may hold.

And in the midst of this time, we find a man named Paul. Paul was a tent maker by trade, who had a powerful experience one day that transformed the way he saw God, Jesus, and the world. He went from seeing hierarchy, status levels, judging who was indeed worthy to receive God's blessing, to creating sacred communities where each person was seen as equal, and loved by God.

I can imagine Paul standing around the market areas, shoppers coming by to sample his wares, gently rubbing the goats-hair cloth through their fingers to determine its quality, with him on the other side of the table simply open for having a chat. Engaging people in conversation about the situations they were facing. People who may have been concerned about their current living situation and society, or the uncertainty of the future and what it will all mean, or those "well it is what it is, what could I possibly do?" It's at that point where Paul likely stepped in and said "well, life doesn't have to be lived like that. What if I told you about something that was different? A unique community? What if I told you, there is a small group of people who look at others as equals? Who share equally around the table and love one another? That are trying to seek where God is leading them? Would you be interested in that kind of community?"

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