

Makarios Blessing / Year in review 2020

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end - Isaiah 9/7

Introduction

Hello everyone.

Well I'm sure I don't need to point out what an unusual year 2020 has been. We've seen numerous lockdowns and I was even consigned to my home as one of our housemates tested positive {The most boring two weeks off work of my life!} Yet despite this major health crisis crippling our country {and the world} the word of God still goes forth in power. God is not on lockdown, amen! Below are some of the highlights of the year 2020

Passing the Trial Period in my 'New' Job

After a long period of lack and a very difficult time financially and a worrying lack of job security I applied for a job as a machine operator. Against all odds {and turning up to two job interviews lacking sleep and in one case not well} I got the job. It was such a blessing and in God's timing it freed me from an increasingly difficult financial situation. 2020 saw my completion of the trial / trainee stage and I am now a permanent employee. I am working night shifts but the pay is good. This has been a big game changer. Thank you to those who prayed for this breakthrough. It was much more than I expected. God is indeed good.

K180 Street Outreaches / Ealing Broadway

Every couple of weeks until the lockdown I have been meeting with an evangelistic organisation called K180 who have a prayer meeting and then an outreach in Ealing Broadway. This was a very specific answer to prayer because Ealing Broadway was on my heart and I didn't know anyone who did outreach there. They bring together people from various churches to go out onto the streets on a Friday evening, preach the gospel {Yes, these guys street preach. I absolutely love it} and engage members of the public

Just before the lockdown they had a mission team of teenagers from the United States of America come over for a week of evangelism. Most of them had done nothing like this before and K180 helped train and equip them for the week. It was awesome. They had people worshipping in the street, sharing testimonies and...they had 'popcorn testimonies' {what do you mean you've never heard of popcorn testimonies!}

Now admittedly this is the first time I've ever heard the term. It's where a person shares something Jesus did for them but shares it within 30 seconds. {That's even quicker than popcorn but you get the point}. It was amazing to see what these young people were doing and I was so stirred up to see so many people on the streets sharing Jesus with people. I usually get one good conversation with a member of the public but on that night I got four.

We come equipped with a resource table and it includes bibles in many different languages. You can meet people from practically anywhere in Ealing Broadway. We have spoken to

Arabs, Africans, Palestinians, Romanians, Poles, Persians along with muslims, Hindus, Seventh Day Adventists, Atheists

In one particular outreach we prayer walked the area as others were outreaching. One of us felt led to pray for the Persian community and, once we returned to the group, a conversation was struck up with a young man who happened to be Persian. He was touched by the gospel and we were able to point him toward a Persian church that actually meet in Ealing.



Some of the snapshots from the Ealing outreach with the American mission team.

American teenager shares testimony in London.

American mission team worshipping in Ealing.

Salvation in Hounslow

As part of my attempt to find new opportunities for street outreach I got in touch with a group of people who do street outreaches in Hounslow {just outside Ealing}. I attended over two successive days and we saw a breakthrough to rejoice over when a young man by the name of Darren, touched by the preaching of the gospel on the streets, was engaged in conversation with the team and we had the pleasure of leading him in a commitment to turn from his sin and follow Christ.



The outreach in Hounslow. Darren receiving prayer for healing with two of the team

Koreans in Central London Outreach

This was another recent connection I have made. We met at the Indian YMCA where they have a room they use as a church and place of prayer. It was amazing. It has been so long since I experienced a prayer meeting like that. Fully charged, spirit filled, dominion taking pentecostal praying! I loved it. We had the outreach in central London and I had opportunities to share what Jesus did in my life. Usually it is the outreach that is the focus but for me the highlight was the 'hour of power' in the prayer room. There I met serious earnest saints and sat down afterwards for a meal together. I am looking forward to further meetings with them when things get back to normal. They were the ones who introduced me to {and are a part of} the Hounslow outreaches.



Worshipping the Lord in London city centre



...and of course some street preaching

London City centre outreach: How great thou art

New Connect Group

As of January I started leading a brand new bible study group {we call them connect groups}. The first meeting was just me and one other person. We started meeting in McDonalds in Ealing Broadway {There are now 5 of us} I was aware from the start how others around us might be listening in or overhearing {you could call it inadvertent evangelism}.

We are looking at the names of God and the difference it makes to know God in this way which has proved to be powerful and life changing. There was an elderly lady who always sat in there with a coffee {at the table right next to ours}. She got talking to us as she wanted to know if we could give us any stickers to get a free cup of coffee {McDonalds run a sticker scheme - buy 6 cups, collect the sticker, put it on a card and get your 7th cup free}. It turns out this lady is a Jewish holocaust survivor and week by week she has been hearing about how the God of the old testament relates to us. It's one example of how God orders the steps of his people. The right person in the right place at the right time. Hallelujah!

It is better to obey God rather than man

Over 2020 I have had time to think soberly about the restrictions placed upon Christians especially in the areas of worship and the essential work of evangelism. I believe that Christians should respect the law and honour authorities. To be honest I have keenly felt the loss of not being able to meet face to face with and worship with other believers as commanded in scripture. While I appreciate online meetings it has become clear that this is not the same and does not provide for the same level or quality of engagement that physical meetings have.

A particular point of concern for me was when the government, after a huge delay and after much protest from churches decided to let churches open but restricted people from singing. This was very difficult for me to accept. Worship is not just singing. It is hosting the presence of God {see Psalm 22 / 3}. I know some Christians have a different interpretation to that verse to me but I got saved in a Pentecostal church and have so many experiences of encounters with God this way. I decided to find a group of Christians who were continuing to meet {while taking reasonable precautions} and found such a clear presence and blessing of God that I simply could not in all conscience continue to go along with the restrictions on churches as they stood.

It was for this reason also that I began to resume street outreaches. I would add that it is important to be wise about how we do things and I fully respect those believers who feel they should comply with all the laws and regulations. I make no judgement of them. For me I have found the same conviction of the Spirit, a divine discontent, that I have experienced when I have not been on foreign mission for a long time. There is an ache that I can only describe as being of the Holy Spirit and when that happens I know it's time to go.

On many occasions I have done this without money or adequate preparation and God meets me right there. He says, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel!" He doesn't say go when you have the money, or, go when you have completed 3 years in a seminary, or go when you have it all planned out. I still make plans but God delights in turning them on their head and getting me where I need to be. I have found the same thing as I have stepped out and committed myself to being with the saints and being on outreach. In various little ways God has protected and provided. I have seen prophetic gifts begin the flow in church services. Also prophetic words coming with supernatural confirmation. Once I shared a testimony using a scripture that came to mind. The lady who testified after me said that God had spoken to her to begin street outreach and had given her that exact same verse. The verse wasn't even directly connected to evangelism!

Blackpool and divine illumination

It was the prince of preachers Charles Spurgeon, who in a sermon in the 1800's preached that "the Spirit of God is not constrained" and used Micah 2 / 7 as his text. Earlier in that passage you can read where God's prophets were commanded not to prophesy, Spurgeon declared that the Spirit of God is not constrained by the commands of men. Read the full sermon by clicking on the link below.

[Is the Spirit of the Lord constrained - By Charles Spurgeon](#)

At the end of the year a group of us went to the town of Blackpool to share the gospel. Admittedly I felt some considerable reticence and at first in my natural mind I decided against it but despite everything I felt compelled to go. We were to soon see that God was orchestrating events.

I recall the encounter well. A young man who was until recently living in London was running away from the call of God on his life and under a considerable black cloud of discouragement. He had very recently decided to hide away at the opposite end of the country. He chose Blackpool. The look on his face when he bumped into us was priceless. We knew this guy. I had personally spoken to him before and had conversations with him and there we were, face to face in Blackpool. You can run from man and from church but you cannot outrun God.

We encountered another man who was troubled and lived in fear of evil spirits. He heard the gospel and we were able to lead him in a prayer of salvation. Another man, who had come to Christ a few years ago had settled in Blackpool in the last two years and had fallen through the net so to speak. He had never become established in a church and the lockdown basically cemented this. He was living alone in a tiny apartment with no friends, no family, no job and no church. I had some really good conversations with him. We spent time together, ate together, prayed together. He was so appreciative and deeply touched and moved. It was such a God orchestrated encounter. The guy we led to Christ was actually a neighbour of his so now he has someone to fellowship with. To think I very nearly didn't go!

It is as the word of Jeremiah 20 / 9 says

"Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." KJV

In Summary

It has undoubtedly been a tough year but I want to declare this. "God is not on lockdown!" The gospel still has power, the conviction of the Holy Spirit still falls upon sinners, Souls are still being saved, the power of God is still available to heal and deliver and Jesus promised, he who believes on me...out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. There is much planned for 2021. I have made a big step of faith and moved into Ealing which is where I believe God wants me. He wants to do a work in this borough. God supernaturally

led me to Ealing and to this bible study group which I am rebuilding. Please believe God with me and pray with me that this would be the start of something much bigger.

I know 2020 has been a year where many of us as Christians {and this country} have just been holding on. Our mindset has been to hunker down and survive. But God wants us to thrive. Genesis 49 / 22 says this...Joseph is a fruitful vine planted by a well whose branches go over the wall.

What are the walls in your life? What are the parameters and constraints that you have accepted? God has not called you to just survive but he has called you to THRIVE and bear much fruit. Our God is a God of fruitfulness and in him, when we are drinking from the well which is His Spirit, our branches will grow over the wall.

2021 is the year to thrive in Jesus name!

Every blessing...

Steve Johnson

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