

**I understand your theme for Lent is – Spiritual Hero's. Movers and Shakers for God.**

Jesus called himself the **Good Shepherd** – *The Bom Pastor, Die Goeie Helder.....*

The reality is that all of us in this church today, are here because of a person, a spiritual leader, a good shepherd, who took us under their wing. He or she Invited us to church, showed us something of the wonder and joy of the Gospel.

Who is that person for you?

For me it was my mother, but I am not going to talk about her this morning... instead, I want to briefly reflect on the life of my Spiritual Hero....

**Desmond Mpilo Tutu**

For me, he is the person that I would love to emulate. He was very Good Shepherd. And I am going to use the structure of Psalms 23 – '**The Lord is my Shepherd,**' as I reflect on this man's great life.

I am sure you are all aware of his life. He was the Archbishop of Cape Town, Leader of the Peace and Reconciliation Commission and Noble Peace prize winner. .... but much more than that. He was an incredible Spiritual Leader.... I would have loved to have meet the man!

Tutu was the kind of person, people followed....but why?

For starters, here was a man of God, like few others. A man with a magnificent sense of humour.

**Tell Joke:**

In addition to that contagious laugh of his, he had a real sense of justice with a resolve to achieve such justice like no other. A man, with deep spiritual roots in the UK, having done his theological masters in London. And an Anglican Priest too – clearly a rare bread.

For Arch, as he called himself, his methodology as a shepherd was simple – '**Shine a light on the truth at all times and in every**

**situation, bring as much love into that situation, for as long as possible and then, forgive and forgive and forgive some more’.**

1) For me, the reason Tutu was such a great shepherd was because he first and foremost... **“Offered Green Pastures”**. His Christian message was always one of Hope. And that positivity is why people followed him.

2) Secondly, here was a man willing to **‘walk through the valley of the shadow of death’** – On one occasion, a man was about to be set alight in a riot..... it was called Necklacing. The rioters put a tyre over your head and then burn it. Tutu, walked into the middle of that Riot and saved the man!

Politically, he had courage too. On another occasion, six people were sentenced to be hanged by the Government. Known as the Sharpeville six.... They had 36 hours left to live. So what does Tutu do? He phoned Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan and begged they intervene. He pleaded for MERCY, not political justice. And he won clemency for those 5 men and one lady! He saved those 6 lives.

3) He was also a man of incredible moral and spiritual wisdom. He knew the meaning of that phrase... **“lead me on the paths of righteousness for thy name sake”**

And that is why he won the Noble Peace prize for his efforts against Apartheid. A man who chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and ensured a peaceful transition of Government, at a time, when civil war was pending.

What I love so much about the man, is that he would 1) start with an idea, 2) find out what needs that idea required, and then 3) meet those needs.

4) Tutu took ownership of the phrase **“You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies”**. He met and dined with political opposition, world leaders, and violent gangsters. And in all his conflict meetings, his mantra was the same: “Don’t raise your voice, improve your argument”. It was a phrase his father – Zachariah Tutu taught him.

5) And as the Psalms ends with the lovely phrase, **“My cup runs over, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life”**

So.... As I reflect back on this man's life, that is my overriding memory. How God fills him with joy and laughter on a daily basis.

As he famously said: **“We may be surprised at the people we find in heaven. God has a soft spot for sinners. His standards are quite low”**.

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