

## VIVIT

There are moments in our life when we are confronted with wonderful divine investment opportunities. In most cases these moments arrive unexpectedly and suddenly. I'm sure that you, in your journey with Jesus, have experienced the arrival of such moments as well. Here is one such encounter that took place in my life and it may be a good example for today's Gospel reading.

It happened during a time when my photographic studio was located in the suburb of Fortitude Valley. Around midday I would take a short stroll just around the corner and enter a Chinese Take-away shop. I was one of their regulars. The conversation that took place on this particular day though, was not a normal conversation. Upon entering the shop the Chinese couple welcomed me.

"Guess what I would like for my lunch today?" I asked them.

The Chinese husband and his wife smiled at me and then declared in unison.

"Fried rice."

We all laughed and his wife departed into the kitchen to prepare my fried rice which I order on most days.

"How's business?" I asked the Chinese gentleman.

"Not very good today," he replied and then he asked.

"You always eat fried rice?"

"I love fried rice," I replied, removing any shadow of doubt.

The rice dish was now cooked and his wife placed it on the counter.

"Are you busy?" The Chinese man enquired; both now looking at me.

"Not today," I replied, "but this is a great opportunity to catch up on my writing."

"You write what?" He asked.

"Short-stories," I replied.

"Oooh , you very clever," she said, stretching her hand out over the counter.

"Three dollar ninety," she said. It sounded a bit like a demand, but I was eager to finish this conversation.

"Writing is a gift from God," I explained, wondering what kind of response my statement would provoke. There was a brief pause as the Chinese lady rummaged through the draw of the cash register and then presented me with \$16.10 change. I felt the urge to identify God and therefore followed up with another statement.

"I believe in Jesus Christ." I said. "What do you believe?"

Her answer arrived like lightning.

"I believe in Buddha," she said. "Buddha like Jesus, very good man," she explained, smiling broadly.

The fried rice in my hand would provide a single meal, I suddenly realized and here was an investment opportunity, a moment in time, were I could offer the living bread that will feed this Chinese couple for eternal life.

A silent prayer rose heavenward, accompanied by a brief pause.

"Yes. You are right," I began. "Buddha is a bit like Jesus. They were both very good men."

Both of them now smiled.

"But do you know the difference between Buddha and Jesus?"

She turned to her husband, searching his eyes for a possible answer and then both of them looked at me and replied in unison.

"No. You tell us."

"Buddha is dead," I said gently, "but Jesus is alive. I can speak with Jesus and receive an answer from him. I can communicate with God at any time of the day, because Jesus is alive and he is my friend. That's the big difference."

As I placed the \$16.10 into my wallet I proceeded to extract a small prayer card that offered the gift of grace, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

"This prayer changed my life," I said, handing the card to them.

This encounter in the Chinese shop was one of many opportunities in my walk with Jesus, to be a shrewd investor for God. It was a divine investment opportunity to share my treasure, my personal faith in Jesus with someone who does not yet know our Saviour and Lord.

Martin Luther, when confined to a small room in the Wartburg Castle, translated the New Testament into the German language. The Bible, up to that time, was imprisoned in the Greek and Latin language and could only be read by a small number of highly educated people. Thus the common man and woman in Germany, around the world for that matter, were denied access to the living Word of God.

We could describe Martin Luther as a shrewd investor, presented by God with an enormous investment opportunity that still bears huge interest for God, one example being, Christians worshipping God in Lutheran Churches all around the world.

Yes, here on the Redcliffe Peninsula, this Grace Lutheran Congregation is part of Martin Luther's investment made 500 years ago. This Grace congregation has increased the divine investment over the years through the creation of the Grace Lutheran Primary school, Grace College and the Crèche Kindergarten. Bayside Community Care is another important opportunity to share the riches that we all possess, namely, the gift of Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel reading for today Jesus said it like this... "there was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions."

God is the rich one and we are the managers of his treasure. It is my belief that this congregation has over the years invested wisely. It has invested and continues to invest in the surrounding community, especially in young people that are educated in our educational institutions, where the Good News of Jesus Christ is shared and lived. Jesus is and will be the greatest treasure humanity can possess.

Therefore, we have a responsibility before God, as a congregation and as individuals and that is to share with this world our knowledge of and our hope in Jesus Christ, because we are the rich managers.

If you wanted to test that statement, simply ask yourself this question.

What is my greatest treasure, something I couldn't and wouldn't want to live without?

I don't know what your private life looks like, because we only get glimpse of each other's life when meeting here on a Sunday, but I want to encourage you to be brave. Be brave and courageous about your faith in Jesus. Please share this faith with others whenever God provides you with this divine investment opportunity. I'm sure that you have already received in the past many such opportunities and taken advantage of those and I'm convinced that God will provide many more in the future. Be brave and share the hope that you possess; a hope in our living God, who gave us his only son, Jesus Christ, to save us.

When Martin Luther translated the New Testament into the German language, he received a visit. The visitor announced that Martin didn't have a hope and that Jesus was dead. Nobody would believe him and his works is in vain. Martin Luther, after hearing these negative thoughts over and over again in his own mind, became very angry with Satan and threw the ink pot at the wall. The ink stain, I believe, has remained there to this day. Then Martin proceeded to write a single word on this wall. Again and again he wrote the same five letter word in Latin word until the wall was completely covered. This word was to remind him of something most important, something we also need to keep in the forefront of our mind.

"VIVIT," was that Latin word. It translates "ALIVE."

Buddha is dead, but Jesus is alive, because God raised Jesus from the dead. Each one of us can communicate with our living God.

We are God's children. We are on a pilgrimage to heaven, guided by the Holy Spirit and the precious living Word of God. On our way we also encounter an enemy, just like Jesus encountered Satan in the desert, who tested him. But it is Jesus, who won the victory for us on a cruel cross. Jesus has saved you and me and he now needs you and me, so that more people can be saved and come to know Jesus as their personal Saviour and Lord as well.

So, I encourage you to be a shrewd manager, to recognise the divine opportunities that God may be presenting to you during the remaining 167 hours of this week and the next and the next. Be courageous and strong in your faith and share this Good News of Jesus. Perhaps that's why we are all commanded to "trust in the Lord with all our heart."

Jesus is alive. I encourage you for this week to write the word "VIVIT", perhaps not all over your kitchen wall, but may be on a sticker and attach it to your fridge door, to remind you that Jesus is alive, that God loves you so much that He gave His one and only son to die for you and me so that we will not perish. Amen

...and may the peace of God, which transcends all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen

(w L 22/09/2019)