

## Discovering Godspace 1: Genuine Revival?

### I've never been more scared than when...

... my Otago University Christian group decided we would go door knocking  
... to tell people about Jesus

- I remember feelings in my gut of panic and dread
  - Who would answer the door?
  - Would they be tall, intimidating, tattooed, scary?
  - Would they have a dog?
    - ◆ *What would they make of a shaking stammering wreck like me?*
- I hadn't figured out who I was, let alone telling anyone else who they should be

### The whole thing was ludicrous

- No-one had talked us through why we should do door knocking, or told us how
  - More to the point, ***I hadn't even become a Christian myself!***
  - I'd just attended a Christian Union meeting or two because someone invited me along
    - ◆ *And next thing they had me door knocking!*

### I've always wanted people to like me

- It strikes me now as I look back, that Door to door evangelism may be the very best cure you can find for that!

### A few years later I did come to know God myself

... and I did really want to tell others

- So outreach is now something I look forward to

### But as I think through all the forms of...

... outreach I've seen over the years

- YFC rallies; Alpha courses, service events like Love Where You Live, the Greg Laurie Crusade, Seeker Services, Christmas events, Hope Projects...

... it seems there's a question at the heart of them all that no-one ever answers:

**Why should anyone out there become a Christian?**

**What difference would Christianity make to their life?**

### Regardless of what kind of outreach you are doing

- That same question is in play

### People look at us and think:

- If I became a Christian would I have to smile all the time?
  - Would I have to be anti-homosexual?
  - Would I have to deny the legitimacy of science?

## Of course the answers to those are No

- But what **would** it mean if they became Christians?
- If we can't say with any real certainty that Christianity would enrich their lives
  - Or we're not sure exactly how
- Then what are we doing outreach for?

## What do you think?

- The people in your neighbourhood?
  - In your school playground
  - In your University Quad
  - In your workplace
- Would they be better off if they were Christians?
  - Why? How? And how strongly do you believe that?
- What would you imagine would change in their lives if they came to Christ?
  - Beyond coming to church on Sundays

## This year at MABC

... we're focusing on outreach

- Why's that?
  - Well we've got our staff team now
  - We've got teams around all our core ministries now
  - Due to consent issues our building project isn't underway just yet
- So we thought, let's not sit round idly waiting

## But as we start 'Discovering Godspace'

... our first outreach series for the year

- I want to take that question seriously:
  - **Why should anyone out there become a Christian?**
  - **What difference would Christianity make to their life?**

## And I want to illustrate it by showing you...

... what happens, not just in individuals

... or in churches

... but in towns, cities, even whole countries

... when people put God first

- I want to point to the tangible, measurable things that happen

## To do this I could tell you about...

... the Great Awakening of the 1730's & 40's

... or the second Great Awakening of the 1800's

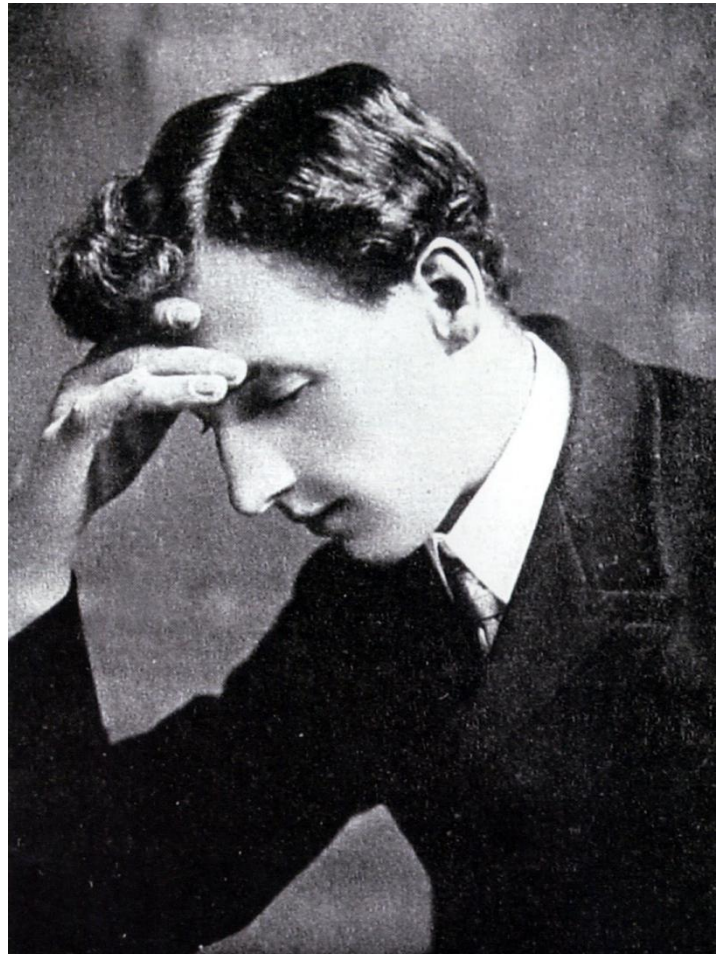
- Or the revivals of the 1850's in various parts of the world
- Or revival amongst Maori in the 1800's - some amazing stories
- Or I could tell you about the Azusa St revival that birthed the Pentecostal movement

- ◆ Or if we wanted close to home I could tell you about the revival in Kawerau just 3 years ago

## Instead I want to tell you the story of the Welsh Revival of 1904

- Because the scale of it, the nature of it and the way it was recorded - even in secular papers ... illustrates really well what happens when a country decides to put God first

What do you think of this guy here?



- Does he look like an intellectual?
  - He wasn't
- He was a coal miner - he started mining at the age of 12
- Hard to imagine isn't it?
  - Going down into the dark, dirty coal mines every day from the age of 12
    - ◆ To help earn your family a living

I also read that this guy suffered from depression...

... at times of his life

- Though in some ways it makes sense, because with depression often comes the ability to see the world as it could be
  - To see yourself and others as they could be
- It's depressing when the world is not like that
  - But you have that visionary ability to actually see the world as it could be

## But this slightly depressive coal miner

... at his peak was probably the most famous man in the world

- If Time magazine had started their Person of the Year back in 1904 I suspect he would've got it

## He would teach Sunday school...

... in his coal mining years

... and memorise Bible verses at night

... and he would encourage other coal miners with a Bible verse each morning

## This man's name was Evan Roberts

... and as a young adult he felt called to church ministry

- He was studying at a seminary in Newcastle when he heard about a local revival that was happening in a neighbouring area
- The students of the seminary asked the principal if he would cancel all classes so they could go to one of those revival meetings
  - If this request came at the Bible College I attended I'm sure the answer would have been No, because of the strict requirements of NZQA!

## But miraculously the principal said Yes

- In fact, what he said to his students was: "You learn more in one week of revival than three years of study at college."
  - Awesome attitude!
- So Evan Roberts and all the other students went down there

## The evening meetings were packed, but in the mornings

... because everyone was at work or school it was just the students and a few elderly women

## So it was in a morning session...

... without all the clamour and noise of lots of people

- That the minister prayed a simple phrase in Welsh, which is now seen as the beginning of the Welsh Revival
  - That phrase translates roughly as, "Oh Lord, bend us"
  - It doesn't sound quite so poetic in English, but we know what it means
  - Bend us to your will, not ours

## And Evan Roberts, who was 26 years of age ...

... went forward at that meeting and prayed, "Oh God bend me."

- And while he was upfront there in the church he got a sense of God reaching down and touching Wales
  - ... and telling him: 'I'm going to give you 100,000 souls'
- So he turned to his friend and said: Do you believe God can give me 100,000 souls?
  - What would you have said?

- ◆ You're dreaming mate!
- The friend said, 'Yes I do believe God can give you 100,000 souls'

## And as history records...

... there were in fact 100,000 Christian conversions in Wales in just the next five months!  
 ... yet that nowhere near covers the scope of the Welsh Revival

## He went back to the principal, of his seminary and said...

- ... "I can't concentrate on my studies I keep hearing a voice that says,  
 'You must go back and talk to young people in your own church.  
 Mr. Phillips," he said, "is that the voice of the Spirit or the voice of the devil?"
- And the principal said very wisely, "The devil never gives orders like that."

## So he went home and his parents said:

- "Why aren't you at study, are you in trouble, have you been kicked out?"
  - "No," he said, "they've given me time off to speak to the young people."
- "What young people?", his parents asked
  - "The young people in our church", answered Roberts
- "Well we were in church on Sunday and the pastor made no announcement."
  - Evan Roberts said, "He doesn't know yet."
    - Isn't that a great answer?!

## What would you say if you were a pastor ...

... and somebody dropped out of bible college after just two months' study and said, "I've come to preach"?

- You wouldn't want to snuff out his enthusiasm
- But you'd be a tad nervous about what he might say!

## So the pastor didn't invite him to preach

- Instead he invited him to the Monday night prayer meeting on Monday."
- At that prayer meeting he didn't allow young Evan Roberts to speak till right at the end  
 ... when he said: "Our young brother Evan Roberts feels he has a word for you if you care to wait."
- Many went on home, but 17 people waited

## And what Roberts did actually say is fascinating

- It wasn't a stimulating intellectual talk at one extreme; nor did he hype people up to a frenzy at the other
- He gave them a simple four point challenge:
  1. You must confess any known sin and put right any wrongs you have done to others.
  2. Second, you must put away any doubtful habit.
  3. Third, you must obey the Spirit promptly.
  4. Finally, you must confess your faith publicly."

All seventeen people responded!

And those became the four points of the Welsh revival.

The pastor - who had been a little reluctant...

... found himself pretty happy with how this turned out!

- So he said, "We have a mission service tomorrow night, would you speak there?"
  - He ended up speaking every day of the week
- On Sunday there was a guest preacher, which was fine

... but after the Guest Preacher finished people were saying : We want to hear Evan Roberts again!

... which can't have been good for the guest preacher's ego!

It may sound like this revival was about the preaching of one man

- Yet Roberts refused celebrity status and gave away his money
  - He refused the evangelistic effort to be about him
- Bear in mind that the revival started before Evan Roberts came on the scene
- And at the same time he was preaching here...
  - ... there was revival in North Wales
  - ... where a Baptist Pastor RB Jones found that people were praying so loud in his services that it drowned out his preaching

So these moves of God started to get the attention of the media

- The Western mail sent a reporter to a church meeting and he wrote:  
*"It was a most unusual meeting. There didn't seem to be an order of service, yet the people didn't want to go home." And he said, "When the meeting closed at 4.25 in the morning, they didn't want to go home. They were standing outside the church still talking."*
- The news was out ... and a landslide of interest came.
- On Saturday every grocery store in that industrial valley was emptied of groceries by people coming to the meetings, and on Sunday every Church was packed.
  - Imagine it!

As I read about this revival...

... it seems like Evan Roberts joined in with it rather than launched it

- You might think that newspaper promotion of the events is what drove it
  - But interestingly Roberts never announced where he was going to be in advance

One eyewitness tells a story...

... of a service starting at 4pm and Evan Roberts arriving there unexpectedly at 7pm

- The church was so crowded he climbed on a bench and walked on the shoulders of the men up the aisle and climbed over the front of the pulpit.
- He only said one word in Welsh, "Gweddiwn" – "let us pray",

- That's all they heard Roberts say, because everyone was praying so loud!

## What kind of praying were they doing?

- The eyewitness said:  
*"Everyone was praying his own prayer. One man was praying, "Oh God, give me another chance now to put things right.", and a mother was praying, "Oh God, my boy hasn't written to me since he went to Liverpool two years ago. Lord what about my boy." Somebody else praying something else. One man took his elbow and hit Mr. Lewis Senior and said, "Would you stop praying? Tell me how I can become a Christian, I can't stand this."*
- When it came time to leave Evan Roberts had to walk on people's shouldres again to get out!
- The eyewitness continues:  
*"But the meeting went on. Mr. Lewis, at two o'clock in the morning said, "Come mother, we better take the children home to bed." One child had fallen asleep and another one was toppling over. They walked home in the drizzle, put them to bed. So close to daybreak that Mr. Lewis sat in a rocking chair in front of the kitchen fire and slept till daybreak, went off to the mines again, came back at three, took a bath, and said, "Come mother, we're going back to the meeting." Went back to the same church, the meeting still going full tilt."*

## And in fact, the whole of Wales was like that

- The reports were in every newspaper in the Western world.
  - Meetings lasted for hours; people would get up and confess their sin; and change their behaviour
  - There were thousands of conversions that brought tremendous joy.
  - Newspapers would actually include a column called: 'Yesterday's Conversions!'
- One article says:  
*Some of the toughest characters in the valleys were converted. It was a revival that was begun and sustained by the young. It is said that thousands of these men died in World War I, 10 years later.*

## But let's also think about the social impact:

### Drunkenness was cut in half, causing a wave of bankruptcies

- Pubs couldn't sell their booze
  - They went broke one after another
- Crime was cut in half
  - In some places the police were unemployed

### A sergeant of police was asked, 'What do you do with your time now?'

- He said, 'Well before the revival our main job was to prevent crime or to control crowds on market day, football games and the like. Since the revival there's practically no crime so we just go with the crowds.'
  - 'What do you mean you go with the crowds?', the reporter asked
    - ◆ 'Well', the constable said, 'you know where the crowds are now, they're packing the

churches, every Church packed every night.'

- ◆ 'We have 17 police in our station, where we've got three excellent male quartets. If any church wants a quartet to sing, they notify the police.'

## Judges had nothing to do...

- There were no cases to try, no robberies, no embezzlements, no rapes, no murders, nothing.'
- There were even slowdowns in the coal mines.
  - So many Welsh coalminers were converted and stop using bad language, that the horses that dragged the trucks and the mines couldn't understand what was being said to them, and transportation slowed down!

## Prostitute houses that were visited by ...

... businessman from England and others from round the world

... turned into singing chapels - this was reported in newspapers

- So men who went there got something quite different to what they were looking for

## The normal working hours in Wales...

... changed during this time to accomodate people's need to get to church - imagine that!

- They'd finish two hours early so people could get to revival services in the evening

## At the revival's height...

- The country's major soccer tournament final
  - ... which is probably like our Super Rugby Final
  - ... was cancelled
- History books that record the winners and losers of that final every year, get to 1904 and it just says the word: **Revival**; then carries on with the winner of the year after that

## The Welsh rugby team...

... had its most successful year so far

- But the players were nowhere near as famous as Evan Roberts
  - Sport just wasn't that important to them

## Bookshops were constantly selling out of Bibles...

... and printing more as fast as they could

## Long term debts began to be paid

... as people got their lives in order

... to the banks, to companies, to neighbours

## How did all this bear out over time?



- Generations later, you could look around the churches in Wales and ask Who became a Christian in the Revival and a large percentage were still there
- You can look at the crime rates historically and you find an overall drop of 50% during the time of the revival
- Statistics show unwed pregnancies dropped by 44% during the revival
- And this revival in Wales echoed across Britain with millions converted, and spread further into Scandinavia Germany, North America, Australasia, Africa, Brazil, Mexico and Chile

## In the midst of all of this...

... someone asked Evan Roberts:

“What is the secret of revival?”

“There is no secret,” was the reply,

“Only, ‘Ask, and you shall receive.’”

- But in that short reply are three things - Scripture, faith and prayer

## Why then should we do outreach?

Why should anyone out there become a Christian?

What difference would Christianity make to their life?

- Because the changes God makes when you let Him work in your life are good
  - Better than good
- Crime, alcohol, prostitution - these things hurt society, just as retail addiction and pornography do today
  - People were filled with joy during this time as those things faded away

## God wants to bring real measurable, lasting change

... and he continues to do that all the time whenever we let Him in

- It just so happens that the things God does were really well documented in revival era Wales

## The running of outreach events or Alpha courses...

... and talking to friends, neighbours, workmates or schoolmates about Christ

... all of these need to issue from the belief that ***allowing God to work in people's lives will be not only good, but amazing***

## What is it that jumps out at you from this story?

## Four points of the Welsh Revival



**1. You must confess any known sin and put right any wrongs you have done to others.**

**2. You must put away any doubtful habit.**

**3. You must obey the Spirit promptly.**

**4. You must confess your faith publicly**

- For me these 4 points cover a lot
- I love how people were getting free from sin  
... confessing it publically
- How loads of people got up the front and talked about Christ's work in their lives
- How they committed to putting away doubtful habits
  - Ahh it's alright isn't it?
  - ◆ If it's doubtful, don't do it!
- And those commitments framed a movement that transformed society for good

Most of all I love how they believed that society's way was not the best way

- A depressive coal miner could see that
- And soon a whole country could see it

I want to leave that story with you...

... as an inspiration and a challenge

- As Nehemiah was just a mere Cupbearer, so Evan Roberts was a Coal Miner
  - What then, is God saying to you, to me, and to our church?

PRAYER

We're going to sing a song that was very popular...

... during the Welsh Revival

- Just listen as the first two verses are sung in Welsh then we'll join in
  - As you hear it, be reminded of the incredible work of our God

## Here is Love

Words: William Rees 102-1883, verses 1-2; William Williams possibly wrote verses 3-4; translated from Welsh to English by William Edwards, 1900.

Music: Robert Lowry, 1876

Here is love, vast as the ocean,  
Lovingkindness as the flood,  
When the Prince of Life our Ransom,  
Shed for us His precious blod.  
Who His love will not remember?  
Whi can cease to sing His praise?  
He can never be forgotten,  
Throughout Heav'n's eternal days.

On the mount of crucifixion,  
Fountains opened deep and wide;  
Through the floodgates of God's mercy  
Flowed a vast and gracious tide.  
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,  
Poured incessant from above,  
And Heav'n's peace and perfect justice  
Kissed a guilty world in love

Let me all Thy love accepting,  
Love Thee, ever all my days;  
Let me seek Thy kingdom only  
And my life be to Thy praise;  
Thou alone shalt be my glory,  
Nothing in the world I see.  
Thou has cleansed and snctified me,  
Hou Thyself has set me free.

In Thy truth Thou dost direct me  
By Thy Spirit through Thy Word;  
And Thy grace my need is meeting,  
As I trust in Thhe, my Lord.  
OF Thy fullness Thou art pouring  
Thy great love and power on me,  
Without measure full and boundless,  
Drawing our my heart to Thee.