



GAIN FROM LOSS:

I heard Boris Johnson say it last week, but Jacinda Ardern and Ashley Bloomfield have been saying it for weeks now; **“Let’s not lose the gains we have made.”**

Of course, students of Scripture will recognise our politicians' words as a mix that originate from Jesus; **“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit his soul?”** (Luke 9:25).

Our leaders have focused on these words to describe the ‘health’ gains and business momentum we have found as a nation and the principle is worthy. As I write this article, New Zealand has no new reported COVID-19 cases. We have now been able to gather in multiples of 100 and there appears to be no community spread of this virus. This we consider a gain. We have also gained social and industry freedoms because we have adhered to recommended health practices and social restraints. None of us wants to lose those gains and we hope with ongoing disciplines, as a country we will have greater gains ahead.

We cannot deny that economically, politically and socially many have experienced losses over the last few months. People made sacrifices in order that the country had time to eliminate the community spread of the Coronavirus. Optimists among us say these losses will create a greater national desire to emerge healthier, stronger and more committed to each other.

Pessimists can see nothing but more loss and predict a coming recession. I will leave the economic and practical details of running the nation to the leaders but will remain vigilant to how they proceed. What I am interested in understanding is the gains the church has made.

CHURCH:

Now is a good time for church leaders and communities to discern what we have gained from the losses that we have experienced. This is good practice so we turn our losses into gains. I believe we are now in a position to ask searching questions like; Have we as the church made gains? Can we recover from what has been lost? Are we likely to repeat our losses? How can we grow our gains? Are we optimistic or pessimistic about the future? What will we learn from our time in isolation to our freedom and worryingly, could we lose the gains we have made?

What did we lose?

We lost face to face access with each other.

We lost fellowship and in some cases members.

Some churches lost connections altogether. Technical isolation was a problem for certain people.

It is reported that some people among us lost interest in linking in with their church family.

We lost teaching schedules and intended programmes.

We lost a phase of camps, conferences and outreaches.

Pastors and leaders lost sleep as they tried to work out how to keep serving their people.

We lost the privilege of mourning with families and friends who experienced death.

We lost the joy of celebrating proposed weddings.

We lost our ability to interact and serve in our communities.

Churches lost income as tithing did not come through Sunday giving.

What did we gain?

We gained an awareness that we were unprepared for such a 'crisis'.

We gained a new appreciation for those who laboured behind the scenes to connect us.

We gained an insight into new initiatives and resourcefulness used to keep us together.

We gained new people watching online Christian content who would not normally do that.

We gained a realization that we can listen to reputable Christian communicators online.

We gained a new love for our leaders and pastors who cared for us albeit remotely.

We gained a fresh perspective that the church is not a building.

We gained a longing to meet together and be close, to sing, worship and learn together.

We gained an understanding of how hard it is to lead a church by 'virtual' means.

We gained quality time with family.

We gained a period of quietness and stillness from our busy schedules.

We gained time to reconnect with friends via technology.

We gained a concern that social media can be used to vent and abuse others.

We gained an opportunity to realise what we truly value and what should be important to us.

We gained respect for essential workers and reminded ourselves that kindness really is a worthy virtue.

We gained new bonds with our neighbours and neighbourhoods.

We gained an understanding that 40% of this nation have no financial savings to draw on.

We gained collaborative leaders who pastored their 'Home Groups'.

We gained greater cooperation as churches supported other churches.

We gained a stronger desire for unity.

We gained comfort knowing we were all in this together.

We gained strength from knowing we are never alone in any crisis.

We gained a sense of great hope when others felt hopeless.

We gained peace when many felt fearful.

We gained newfound zeal for gospel outreaches.

We gained reassurance that our God still loves, cares and comforts His people.

In my opinion, we have gained vital information that we can learn from during this extraordinary time in our history. Undeniably, our losses hurt, but this opportunity has also given us the time to identify and enhance our strengths. If we are to make Gospel gains into our society we must not repeat the mistakes of the past.

Our ultimate goal is to gain souls for the Kingdom of heaven. Our efforts and our focus need to zero in on helping men and women, boys and girls find eternal life for their souls. **These are gains we must not lose and we will do well to give our full attention to these gains.**

Blessings to all

Graham Ashby