

How do you sell something? I know that amongst the congregation we have those more qualified to offer sales and marketing advice. But I'll let you into a secret – it is just psychology!

If I told you that there is a new superfood that has a delicious and satisfying crunch, the nutritional values far beyond anything you have ever eaten, with high protein levels, more calcium than milk but takes a fraction of the water to and space to than beef. Would you be interested? Well, here is the food:

*[Present the food in a simple container, wrapped in paper.]*

Yum yum. Who wants to try? *[Ask for a volunteer to eat the food]*

Now, if I were to tell you that this meal, was made of spiders, specifically a particular type of spider that feeds off the flies that infest raw sewerage, would you be disgusted? Possibly. Would you have tried it? Probably not. It is about psychology.

The story of 'selling' potatoes to the French in the time of Louis XVI.  
<https://frenchforfoodies.com/tag/history-of-potato-in-france/>  
Apparently Jacques Quartier brought potatoes to France after an expedition exploring the Americas. In France, Count Parmentier (yes there is a potato dish named after him) a pharmacist, chemist and employee of Louis XVI, planted them in a garden with the intention of growing and harvesting the potato on a mass scale in order to feed the French peasant population. Unfortunately the potato was not an instant hit with the French who, at the time regarded it with great suspicion and fear. Since in its raw green state the potato is somewhat poisonous and not even dogs would eat them, the potato was a hard sell for Parmentier until he adopted a bit of reverse psychology.

Parmentier planted 50 acres of potatoes on a plot of land on the outskirts of Paris. During the day, he instructed a royal guard to watch over it. When the locals noticed that the crop was of such value that royal guards were protecting it, their curiosity grew and hordes of people came to see what all the fuss was about. The trick worked. The potato gained a heightened intrinsic value overnight, and very quickly attracted widespread acceptance – today being one of the major foods in Europe and the rest of the world.

What is happening is that the people only wanted something because of their perceived value in it, not because of the ACTUAL value. What's the difference between two brands of flour, home brand and Edmonds? Nothing – even Richard Tills buys HomeBrand, I've seen him at the checkout with a trolley full of the stuff! What's the difference between budget butter and the premium NZ butter that is sold for megabucks overseas? Nothing. Just the label. Just don't tell the Australians.

What were Peter and the disciples to do with the knowledge that Jesus was the Messiah, the promised high priest and king of Israel, the Son of God?! Not tell anyone. Poor marketing? Or, if there was only the words, only an academic knowledge of the joy, healing and mercy inherent of the Kingdom of Heaven, it would not change lives. Peter and the disciples were now living in an expectant hope, pent up to bursting of what God is doing, with all that energy put into LIVING OUT the kingdom rather than just talking about it.

Is our life collectively or individually, LIVING OUT the knowledge that we have of Jesus, Messiah, Son of God, intimate in relationship with us, present with us in Trinity? Is that speaking volumes about who and what we are without even offering a single spoken word?

Is it not encouraging the crowds in Jerusalem from across the world to question how it is that our life, even in the midst of chaos, uncertainty and hardship is full of joy and peace? This joy within oppression and on the brink of a bottomless pit that we may always fall into should be so vivid in another person's eyes that they consider us to be drunk at 9am in the morning.

When we are told, that despite our size, despite the hardships we face, despite everything that we are, that we are an inspiration – then we say come join us and find the knowledge that we have that stokes the fire in our hearts – that Jesus is here. Amen.

*If time offer a quick bible study as the passage has a lot to unpack:*

- <sup>13-16</sup>A distinction between Jesus asking about the Son of Man (with the disciples suggesting John the Baptist, of Elijah etc) and Peter's declaration that Jesus is Son of the living God.
- <sup>17</sup>Peter is the son of Jonah? Who is Jonah, a prophet who struggling to understand God's call, comes round and changes a city's fortune. Peter not Jonah's son just as Peter isn't Satan when he is told to get in behind! Peter falls occasionally, but follow's God's call with fervour.
- <sup>17</sup>It is a spiritual understanding, not the physical embodiment of Jesus that Peter's faith is based on. It will continue beyond Jesus' ascension.
- <sup>18</sup>Simon is now Peter, a Rock - building a church not physically but spiritually. Gates [of Hades] don't push against anything, they are gates. Hades represents the place where we have no relationship esp. with God. We also know that God is everywhere, so Hades is the choice we make not to have this relationship with God.
- <sup>19</sup>Whatever the church binds: if the church offers forgiveness, mercy, joy and peace, then heaven is there; we are bound in relationship with God. If we don't offer this, then we are loosed from this relationship in heaven.

## **Matthew 16:13-20 (NRSV from bible.oremus.org)**

**Peter's Declaration about Jesus** 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' 14And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 15He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' 16Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' 17And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. 18And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. 19I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' 20Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.