

Jobs in church!!

Ephesians 3:1-12

John 1: 10-18

Most spread out sermon series ever - 1 now, 1 in March and part 3 in April

Want to talk about Jobs in Church, Spiritual Gifts, and What am I called to do.

We all know there's a long list of jobs in the church that we need filling - churchwarden, flower arranger, church hall housekeeper etc. And in preparing this series its really interesting how often in the last 4 years I've spoken about jobs in church. What I haven't really talked about so much are spiritual gifts and calling.

And the New Year is often a time when people review their life - what did I do last year, what does the new year hold? I wish I had more time for this, or I must try to do that - all those resolutions!

I guess its easy to think what you'd like to do less of, and the things you want more of - it might not be in your control!

Well as you daydream, plan what you might do - here's a bit of an extra to think about..

God has a purpose for you life.

He didn't just have you born and say - off you go, see what you can make of it!

Perhaps you think that would be ideal - all these experiences and resources in life - off I go! Or maybe its daunting. Maybe, like me, you look at a ball of wool and your mind goes blank. I don't know how to turn it into a jumper! I could use it to tie some stuff up. Maybe I'll just get some glue and stick it on some card as a sheep picture!

Does your life feel like that? I didn't know what I wanted to do, I got some schooling, I met someone, I had some children - I looked after a house. It was ok. Some bits were great. Some bits were awful.

Imagine drifting across the ocean, not knowing where you're going, or what you're doing - luck, chance, and all the time a bit lost and confused as to what's supposed to be going on.

Well - let me give you some good news -

God has given you a purpose!

In life, and in church

Your part of the body of Christ! You're here for a reason!

You were baptised not into the church of England or an institution but into a spiritual body whether you are a Jew, a Greek, a slave or free.

Eek!

But good news - he called you, he knows you, he loves you, he's got the perfect thing lined up for you life - one which you'll really love and enjoy! All you have to do is trust him and be part of his plan.

Beuase God has a plan.

People complain about God allowing so much suffering, and not intervening, but one argument in God's defence is - but it would be much better if you were following the plan!

I mean if the car doesn't go forward, we might not have it in the right gear?

You can have a computer, but if you don't follow the right steps, its not going to do what you want?

God has got a plan for the earth, but if we don't follow his plans, then who's fault is that?

And part of God's plan is the Church.

Its not an idea from humans - its God's idea!

God didn't set up the church to belong to the Archbishop, the Bishop or the Vicar or indeed even to the people who attend.

In Jesus' time on earth God's People saw the High Priest and others as running the religious show; almost like it was theirs! The role of the average person was to go along and maybe have some job to do but on the whole they were simply supporting a religion.

But when Jesus says he will build his Church, it is a body, made up of many parts, carrying out God's will on the earth.

Folks - its supposed to be much more an adventure than sitting in rows and singing!

(Not that that's not fun! Or even part of it - it is. What I'm saying is that we need to be bolder in our ideas of church)

So if the church is a spiritual body, the visible Body of Christ on earth, here to carry out Jesus work today.

And in good old human fashion, we take something good from God and it somehow becomes distorted.

So when we realise the church is the body of Christ, here for a purpose, and we all have a part to play we can fall into one of 2 extremes -

Some say - The church has no hands and feet but ours.

I've heard that a lot in St James - its not from the Bible, but from St Theresa of Avila in the 16th Century. And its an idea that keeps us very committed - God wants it done, but he can't do it, so I've got to. On the plus side, it gets a lot done, and we're very motivated. On the down side we can be too busy, there can be too many jobs for too few people. We can feel we're letting God down if we don't serve teas, do the flowers, deliver Christmas cards, serve on PCC etc. In the long term it leads to people becoming grumpy and resentful, judgemental of those who don't do as much, and burn out.

And theologically - it denies the power of the supreme being in the universe to do anything!

Imagine how God feels - he who made the starry skies and every living thing being told - no, its no good, that church brass is too much for you God, you can't possibly do that!

Of course he can! If he can't then I give up on God right now!

So what's the other extreme we fall into?

The church just needs more prayer, more power. The apostles prayed and God sent workers, sent his Holy Spirit, God healed, God sent money. If the church needs anything we should just pray, and God will send us the right gifts. Ask and you will receive, you lack because you do not ask says our St James. Martha who sat at God's feet was praised, Mary the one with the hands in the sink was told off. So there are good things in this - we should pray and worship, its sunlight and water to our souls. We should ask for God's power, and ask for what we need. We should expect to receive gifts from God.

But, the downside, is we can be too heavenly minded as to be any earthly good. If we're just praying, then who is making the lunch or caring for our neighbour or sorting out the health and safety policy?

For me one of the unique and beautiful parts of Christianity is that God has asked to work with us in his plans! He has not said - I'll take care of it, you just keep the worship coming - he says - lets do this together!!

Imagine someone's journey to faith.

There was the Sunday school teacher who told them the stories.

The parents who prayed for them for years.

The person at Uni who invited them to a bible study

The other person who befriended them at church

The person who put up the poster about the church event

The person who gave the talk at the event

The person who prayed with them

And the people who helped them learn how to live as a friend of God.

God could have just zapped them! But he used all those people.

He used all that prayer, all that care, and all that work.

God wants us to use our hands and feet for him.

God wants us to pray and ask for more power

Its not an either or - its both!

In fact there's not 2 parts, but 3!

If I can finish with the Trinity (what ? In January?)

The urge for us to serve, to show our commitment in doing - is from **Jesus** - who came and did - he healed, he served

The urge for us to receive God's power, to receive Gifts from God - is from the **Holy Spirit** - who is the power of God in this world in this universe. Like with wind, you can't always see it, but you see its affects.

The third part might be seen as the need for us to be wise - not to waste our time or efforts or run off in the wrong directions. God answer Job questions by asking if he knows how it all fits together or how it works? We need to go to our **Creator** God for wisdom to do things his way, and then be obedient and following it.

How often is our complaint about the church, or government or many things in life - why is that being done so badly, isn't there a better way to run the NHS, or the Church of England, or whatever? Sometimes we willingly give our hands and feet, there is the commitment

And we have prayed, and we might even have receive spiritual gifts.

But we lack the wisdom to use those both rightly.

Part 2 - in March - will be about Spiritual Gifts.