

Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit
Worship for Sunday 2th May – Vocations Sunday

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!” Isaiah 6:8 (NRSV)

Singing the Faith 564 - Charles Wesley

O Thou, Who camest from above,
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart.

Jesus, confirm my heart’s desire
To work, and speak, and think for Thee:
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up Thy gift in me.

There let it for Thy glory burn
With inextinguishable blaze,
And trembling to its source return,
In humble prayer and fervent praise.

Ready for all Thy perfect will,
My acts of faith and love repeat,
Till death Thy endless mercies seal,
And make the sacrifice complete.

Prayer

Loving Lord God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We offer you our worship and our praise this day. You are the everlasting God. All merciful and ever loving, we voice our praise to you. We give thanks to you that you poured your love upon us through the life of Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we have been called to follow. And by your Holy Spirit’s presence we have been empowered to fulfil our calling.

For that call we thank you, for your gifting we thank you. For your Mercy and forgiveness, we praise you.

May we ever walk with you and proclaim your love to all.

In Jesus’ name we pray.

Amen.

After a quick look at a dictionary I found calling described as ‘a strong urge towards a particular way of life’. It suggested we could also use the word vocation. As Christians we are all given a calling. Indeed, much of life’s journey is to discover for ourselves what that calling may be. It is perfectly possible that that call changes as we grow. What God called us to in our youth may not be the same as what God calls us to now. Yet for some, God’s call on their lives is unwavering throughout. In the following reading from Acts, Philip discovers his calling.

Acts 8:26-439

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Get up and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over to this chariot and join it.’ So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ He replied, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

‘Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.

In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.'

The eunuch asked Philip, 'About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?' He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

Philip is called to be alongside the Ethiopian Court Official to help him understand who Jesus is and what the Good News is all about. He guides the official into a way of understanding. If our primary call as followers of Jesus is to love one another – believing and living the good news of God's Kingdom - then wrapped up in that loving is the understanding that we are to reveal what Christ has to offer to each and everyone we meet. The following psalm sings of all nations worshipping God and future generations being told about the Lord. Note the praises of God stem from the poor being fed and satisfied. The love of Jesus is to be communicated with more than words and we all have a role to play.

Psalm 22:25-31

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.
May your hearts live for ever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.
For dominion belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.

To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
and I shall live for him.
Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord,
and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.

John 15:1-8

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you

unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

In Matthew 7 Jesus says, 'you will know them by their fruits'. So, what fruit do we produce? It is another way of asking what our calling is. We might like to describe the life we live for God in Jesus as a vocation. Let us give thanks to God for all those who have discovered their calling and are producing fruit! But maybe we are not sure yet. We know we want to produce good fruit for God by the way we live but we feel nothing much is blossoming. This passage in John reminds us that before the fruit we need good healthy growth. That growth comes from continuing to live in Jesus and allowing God to work with us. Prune us, if you will, so that the best fruit can be produced out of who we are. But rest assured God is calling us all to produce fruit. So let us live for God; telling others of the life we have found in him through our words and our actions.

Singing the Faith 437 – When the music fades – Matt Redman

When the music fades
All is stripped away
And I simply come
Longing just to bring
Something that's of worth
That will bless Your heart
I'll bring You more than a song
For a song in itself
Is not what You have required
You search much deeper within
Through the way things appear
You're looking into my heart
I'm coming back to the heart of worship

And it's all about You,
It's all about You, Jesus
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it
When it's all about You,
It's all about You, Jesus

King of endless worth
No one could express
How much You deserve
Though I'm weak and poor
All I have is Yours
Every single breath
I'll bring You more than a song
For a song in itself
Is not what You have required
You search much deeper within
Through the way things appear
You're looking into my heart

I'm coming back to the heart of worship
And it's all about You,
It's all about You, Jesus
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it
And it's all about You,
It's all about You, Jesus

As a companion of the Northumbria Community I want to share with you a prayer from our Daily Evening Liturgy. These words speak of trust and reliance on God in all situations. We may not know quite what we are being called to but, in our vulnerability, we are confident that God is with us. Maybe, like Philip, we are called to be the one to walk alongside someone who needs guidance. Maybe we are being called to open the scriptures and share what we know (or indeed what we don't yet know) with others. Are we being called to preach or lead worship? At this time of uncertainty one thing is certain. The church needs you. God has a place for you. Together, let us listen for God's call and prepare ourselves to respond.

Expressions of faith – taken from Northumbria Community Evening prayer

Lord, You have always given
bread for the coming day;
and though I am poor,
today I believe.

Lord, You have always given
strength for the coming day;
and though I am weak,
today I believe.

Lord, You have always given
peace for the coming day;
and though of anxious heart,
today I believe.

Lord, You have always kept
me safe in trials;

and now, tried as I am,
today I believe.

Lord, You have always marked
the road for the coming day;
and though it may be hidden,
today I believe.

Lord, You have always lightened
this darkness of mine;
and though the night is here,
today I believe.

Lord, You have always spoken
when time was ripe;
and though you be silent now,
today I believe.

Prayer

Lord God, we thank you for all the people who have served you
As preachers and leaders of worship,
Of prayer and fellowship groups and bible studies.
Who have worked for you by sharing, encouraging, questioning.
Helping and leading others to discover a deeper relationship with you.

Lord, may I play my part, fulfil my calling
And serve you in all I do.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Singing the Faith 239 – Jose Aguiar

Sent by the Lord am I;
My hands are ready now
To make the earth a place
In which the kingdom comes.

The angels cannot change
A world of hurt and pain

Into a world of love,
Of justice and of peace.

The task is mine to do,
To set it really free.
O help me to obey;
Help me to do your will.