



Vision #11

All involved

w/c 17 March 2024

"God's call comes to us all, for all of our days and years, and for all of our activities. There is no retirement from Christian pilgrimage. Nothing in our lives is exempt from the call of the gospel. No activity stands beyond it."

(from *All are called*, published by the Church of England Board of Education, 1985)

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–26

It's all too easy when reading this passage to jump in and start thinking which body part we might be – or would like to be!! In truth, it's much more to do with emphasising that all of us are called and that all callings – being from our Father – are of equal value.

It is vital to remember that our calling is not for its own sake, but rather that we might be sent. Even, if necessary, as lambs among wolves – as Jesus described (Luke 10:3) when sending the 72. Jesus told these first disciples that he was sending them out – too often we forget that our ministry is supposed to be focused on and in the community around us. Doing church is not our purpose, but rather the means to that purpose – equipping us for service within our community, as the extract from *All are called* makes clear. How might we seek to reinstate this biblical position that all are called and sent by God in this way?

Thinking further on the idea that the centre of our Christian life should lie outside the church, the well-known writer, Lesslie Newbigin noted that, *"The primary action of the church in the world is the action of its members in their daily work."* How do we shake off the inherited feeling that church-stuff is somehow more important (or holy) than those things we do in our real life?

If we think back to our study of 3 March when we looked at Matthew 7:21-23, it is important to remember that our ministry is not just a heaping up of Christian activities. It requires an intimacy with God built through prayer, word and Spirit. Knowing God is what matters as John made clear in his gospel – see ch17v3. How do we become a church based on that relationship rather than on the set of activities we do?

In re-examining its ministry a few years ago, the Diocese of Birmingham noted that, *"The idea that some Christians 'do' ministry and other Christians have ministry 'done' to them is quite contrary to this biblical understanding. Rather, those who are called to lead the church are called to equip all God's people to be ministers and missionaries in their homes, workplaces and communities."* Reflect for a minute or so on these words which sprang from their People and Places initiative – how do we turn centuries of received wisdom on its head and create a church across the country where all are seen as having this active ministry?

It's interesting to note that the two Greek words *laos* and *kleros*, from which we derive laity and clergy, are both – in biblical terms – applicable to all believers. I was also struck that the authors of that 1985 report advocated that we see the key sacrament of calling to a Christian ministry as that of baptism. It's something for all of us. What do you think?

Read 1 Peter 2:4–10

The image Peter uses here of Christians working together, built together is far simpler than that Paul gave to the Corinthians: we're all stones, that's it. No differentiation, but together we become more than just the sum of the parts. What is needed of a stone that it can be built with others?

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?"
(Martin Luther King, Jr.)