



Holy Spirit #8

Consecration and Anointing

w/c 23 June 2024

"Use me, God. Show me how to take who I am, who I want to be, and what I can do, and use it for a purpose greater than myself." (Martin Luther King, Jr)

Read Ephesians 1:3–14 and Acts 10:34–43

Our Ephesians reading is clearly one of the mountain-top moments of scripture. However, glorious though these words are, they should perhaps carry a health warning. It's all too easy, having read them to conclude that God has done it all and we can just lie back and luxuriate in all that. We only have to read on in the letter however to realise that this is not so – in what are now the opening words of chapter four, Paul feels the need to urge his readers to ensure their lifestyle matches their calling and to *"make every effort"*. How do we avoid the temptation to 'let go and let God' and instead focus, as Paul described it elsewhere, on striving for the gospel?

Consecration is the act of making something holy: setting it apart for God's purposes. Anointing talks, literally, of oil poured onto something or someone. It is a physical symbol of consecration. As we look at the record of anointing throughout the bible, we find it applied to (mainly) three groups – priests, kings and the altar and other items used in connection with sacrifice in temple worship. Individuals were anointed for a role, a purpose; how do we become clear what ours is to be?

We can find clear links to Christians for these three aspects within the New Testament – we are called a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). And then in Hebrews 13:15–16, the writer notes that – through our actions – *"praise ... and to do good and share with others"* – we provide the new sacrifice.

The bible speaks more specifically of our – as Christians – being anointed – see for example 1 John 2:20 and 2 Corinthians 1:21. And if anointed, called to a specific task or role. Another Greek term connected with being appointed to a role is *kleros* (from which we derive clergy); biblically though it is something applied to all believers. We all therefore have a ministry – a special calling and sending from God. In this context it can be slightly confusing when simple Greek terms have been carried through untranslated in English and used as titles. For example, *apostolos* simply means one who has been sent (usually for some purpose). And Jesus most certainly sent us for a purpose. Also, from the slightly later Latin, *missio* simply means "I send". So, Jesus, in sending us, makes us all missionaries. How can we fulfil such a calling within or outside the structures of the modern church?

Which brings us back to the purpose of all this. A key must be to consider where it is we have been sent. Surely, we are set apart – anointed and consecrated – in order to go into society as witnesses of all that Jesus did. It's not a licence for becoming a hermit. What might encourage us to go out into our community – only there can we fulfil our calling as salt to the world?

Acts 10 includes the command to preach and testify. Peter may have focussed on these as he was, in effect, preaching to Cornelius at the time. There are though many more things we are commanded to do – as we saw from Hebrews above, it clearly includes 'doing good', but also making disciples, being witnesses, healing the sick and many more. Various passages indicate that we are likely to be gifted for certain roles within the church. How do we determine what is our calling at any particular time?

"The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service. The greatest form of praise is the sound of consecrated feet seeking out the lost and helpless." (Billy Graham)