

Talents, gifts and graces

Today's Thought for the Day from Rod

Today's reading Acts 6.1-15

Oh, this is an interesting passage, isn't it? Some of the people in the church had a complaint and what it boiled down to was that they felt another group was being favoured over their group. That's a new one isn't it? But it's the response that I find interesting.

The disciples didn't respond by saying, "OK then, we'll change our priorities". Nor did they respond by trying to suggest that it wasn't like that really. No, they stuck to their core task and appointed others to deal with the issue.

"it would not be right for us neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the spirit of wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

It was not that this ministry of caring for the widows was unimportant, quite the reverse. It was so important that a special group of people who had the gifts of being full of the Spirit and wisdom, would be appointed to that task in order that the twelve could concentrate on their core tasks.

They chose a group of seven men who had this gift, who were presented to the apostles, who prayed over them and laid their hands on them.

So, because the apostles were able to concentrate on the ministry of the word the word of God spread and the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly.

In the Methodist church we often have a list of jobs that need doing and are constantly trying to persuade people to do the jobs. As a result we sometimes end up with people in roles that they're

not equipped for. What if, in the brave new world that we are about to enter we stopped that and instead asked what gifts God has given the people and then deployed them in that ministry. What if we could take that approach across the churches of Alderley Edge?

What would it look like if the Church of England members focused on the ministries that God was giving them, and the Methodist church focussed on the ministries that God is calling us to? What if we didn't all try to do everything, but each focussed on our won calling and blessed the others in their calling?

What if the apostles focussed on the ministry of the word of God and the pastoral ministry was focussed in the hands of others? That would be really radical wouldn't it?

A couple of verses of Charles Wesley:

My talents, gifts and graces, Lord,
Into thy blessed hand receive;
And let me live to preach they word,
and let me to thy glory live;
My every sacred moment spend
In publishing the sinners' friend.

Enlarge, infame and fill my heart
With boundless charity divine:
So shall I all my strength exert,
And love them with a zeal like thine;
And lea them to thy open side,
The sheep for whom their shepherd died.