

# Seven Churches Benefice

uniting the Parishes of Aldwincle, Clopton, Pilton,  
Stoke Doyle, Thorpe Achurch, Titchmarsh, Wadenhoe

Weekly Reflection 6 - Wednesday 13th April 2020

## A Holy Calling?

Greetings once again from Aldwincle Rectory on the Wednesday of the fifth week of Easter. This is my sixth midweek reflection since COVID -19 turned our lives upsidedown and we were required to close our churches. My apologies that I was unable to provide a reflection last week, but I was busy managing on-line interviews for potential ordinands (that's the name given to trainee vicars) in the hope they will be able to commence training this autumn. In the midst of the coronavirus it was a very uplifting experience to meet with people from a wide variety of backgrounds and ages each one on a journey exploring where God's call to serve would take her or him next. Some were life-long Christians, others were people who had only come to faith in more recent years, and still others had drifted away from faith in their teens, 20's and 30's only to discover its true significance for them later in life.

Of course, God calls all different sorts of people to do all different sorts of things, of which being a vicar is just one example. First and foremost, he calls each every one of us to live a life that is pleasing to him. It is a call which the apostle Paul wrote about in his second letter to a young ordinand called Timothy back in the earliest days of the church, and here as our Bible passage today are the first 10 verses:

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

## Reflection

In this passage Paul reminds us that *'God has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of God's own purpose and grace. Grace given to us in Jesus Christ before the beginning of time.'* That's quite amazing – isn't it?

Let me take you back eleven weeks to Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February, Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. Yes, I know it seems an age ago, a different world! But I wonder, do your reflections of Lent remain in sharp focus? Are the resolutions you made still part of your daily practice and new life or have the old habits returned? Is chocolate once again in the ascendancy?

If we engage with these questions we may feel as frustrated as St Paul did when he wrote to the Christians in Rome. 'I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do' (Rom 7.19) Like him, we might feel that we are unable to subdue our more flamboyant appetites, that our end of term report is always destined to read 'could do better'.

And yes, we are, each and every one of us, called to do better, to return to the cycle of self-examination and self-discipline, not just in Lent, but when we gather together for worship week by week, as we pray day by day, seeking to shape our lives after the pattern of Jesus. But, we are not left to this work on our own. In fact, holiness is not mainly the fruit of our own efforts at all, it is a gift of God who bestows upon us 'a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.' Our own dogged pursuit of the way of holiness is in thankful response to God who has already set us on this path and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace.

Grace – 'God's riches at Christ's expense'. For a spell during my time working in London I had an office near Southwark Cathedral which I would often visit. A plaque that frequently caught my eye was one to William Winkworth which read 'late chaplain of this parish... he fell asleep in Jesus, a debtor to grace'. We are all 'debtors to grace' and God's grace extends to each and every one of us 'a holy calling'. What calling I wonder is God stirring in your heart and mind today?

## Prayer

Lord help us to believe that we are all ordinary people made extraordinary through your vision and your power.

Take our insecurities and feelings of inadequacy and give us the courage to see ourselves and others as you see us, called and gifted by grace with the potential to transform your world and build your Kingdom.

**Amen**