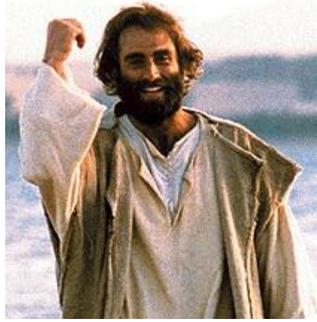


Week 35: February 24th



The Work Begins

The temptations are over and Jesus arrives in Galilee to begin his ministry, estimated to be about three years, but what he achieved in that time is surely staggering. I am reminded of a programme I saw of a young girl of 16 who died of terminal cancer. In her short life she did more that I have ever done in my 60+ years! But then it's not how long it takes us - but what we do, the quality and the effect.

I love this picture of Jesus, he is inviting us to come and join him. That's when the work began, with the disciples who responded to his call to follow, and then this opening up of people to God's love, through teaching and miracles, signs and wonders. Not everyone was open and particularly not the religious authorities of the day. But would we be any different, if Jesus came and upset our cosy church life and witness and challenged what we do, would we be welcoming?

What is amazing is that Jesus entrusted his disciples to continue the ministry. St Paul also was able to let go of the churches he planted in order to go and plant more, leaving those he had taught behind to continue the work. I know he wrote to them, but he didn't stay there, he moved on to make sure the Good News was spread. I wonder how many of us hold onto things because we either feel we are the only ones who can do the job or if we don't do it, somehow we feel that we have nothing to offer? Personally, moving on in the Methodist ministry every few years is very painful, leaving behind friends and situations and the fact that the churches have not collapsed without my valuable support and input is a hard lesson that I had to learn! No one is indispensable and when we leave or move on God raises up others to use their gifts and graces for his work.

Jesus knew his time was limited, he made the best of what he could with those around him. And he does that still today. Ministry is not about being ordained, it is about serving our God where he places us amongst the people we meet day by day. Some people may be called to serve in a particular way, but most people live out their faith, calling and witness locally. It's not that long ago since you made the Covenant Prayer - has anything changed I wonder? May you use this time of Lent to re-examine what it is Jesus has invited you to do in following him and what work he has waiting for you to be part of.

I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. Amen.