

Sermon 3rd after Trinity Gal 2: 15-end Luke 7: 36-8:3

Before I start there is some information to impart,

The Rural Dean and Archdeacon in the re-organising of the Deanery has asked me to work full time and take on the parishes of Iping and Stedham. It will mean that, hopefully, in September I will be first made Priest in Charge of those Parishes, still being Rector here, and then we will work toward becoming a united benefice.

There are lots of positives for this, firstly our parish share to the diocese goes down slightly, secondly whenever I move on, which won't be for a long while as there will be lots to keep me busy, but when that time comes you will be in a very good position to fill the vacancy with someone who is not looking to retire, which quite often half time posts attract.

Thirdly it brings us full circle as historically we were joined with Iping and Stedham.

They are our neighbours and they are on their knees, with low congregations. They are really happy to be part of us and look forward to a new beginning.

As for me I didn't set out to have a half time post, but I felt very much called to be here. It came about in a way that I had little part in. I had been for an interview in Hawkley, I didn't get the Job Rona who was a curate from the Portsmouth diocese, got the position. Just after the Churchwardens from Hawkley contacted me and said they were sorry they couldn't have both of us and that they had been praying for me and if it was ok could they give my name to Milland because they need a Rector and we think you would be perfect. And the rest is history.

So it didn't come from me and when that happens I know that I haven't forced my will and so I hope that by that it is God's will.

Things have worked out really well in the respect that being half time I have been able to work on my MA, which I need to finish before the end of the summer, so I'll be free from that to work full time.

For our benefice and Iping and Stedham, it will mean looking at our service patterns which I know will be of great concern to many, but with Jan from Iping and Stedham who is a reader I think we can manage with very little disruption. Jan as a lay Reader can take Matins and Evensong. And I'm happy to have someone to share the ministry with.

Rural churches have to start thinking of being one church in a place with for us 4 buildings, we must remember that we still have less people in our communities than a town or city parish would have.

We are here to build Christ's Church in this place, to work together for the common good, and in that we have to think of ourselves as one church.

We already have connections, Leslie plays the organ at Stedham, the choir at Stedham help us out at times when we need more voices especially at weddings.

It is an exciting time, and I think we have secured our future, it will take team work and a bit of give and take, but a real chance to be the church that Jesus envisioned. I'm sure he didn't imagine we would be so divided by our buildings.

If we look back at the Gospel reading today, we get a glimpse of how things worked for Jesus' ministry. He didn't just rely on the twelve named disciples he had others around him that made his ministry possible. "The twelve were with him as well as some women...Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

We don't do ministry on our own, Jesus didn't he had many more disciples than the twelve and what a surprise many of them were women.

The Christian faith is about unity not division

It's about team work, It's about building up, it's about reaching our communities, it's about worshiping God, and finding a way that all can worship God, so that is why it is right that we have both Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship, Messy Church and all the other ways to allow everyone to find what is right for them. The women with the alabaster jar of oil found her way of worship by anointing Jesus much to the disgust of many but Jesus accepted it because she showed more love than others who gave him little.

The gospel today and those over the last three weeks have been about faith, and each time it is the faith of each person that has saved them.

And I'm asking us all to dig deep into our faith to think about how we can work together not for our own needs but for the needs of each other and let us build a church here as Jesus would have envisioned.

Today also is the Queen's birthday and we can use her also as our inspiration, the Queen would never have coped with her calling if it wasn't for her faith.

She says

I know just how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God...I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel.

She is an inspiration to us all and I pray that we can also be an inspiration to others as we start a new chapter in the life of this benefice.

We wish the Queen a very happy birthday and give thanks for the sacrifices she has made over the years. May we learn from her. The servant Queen and the King, she serves. Amen