

Sermon notes Sunday 29th April

Reading John 15:1-8

Just as God calls his people to serve the church He also calls people to serve in education, finance, IT, the health service, politics, retail, etc the church as a whole needs to help and support its members in serving in these areas too. Maybe our calling changes over time maybe we are called to places both within and outside the church at varying levels of commitment at the same time. We can only discern what God is calling us to by spending time with and listening to God.

The parable of the vine has God the gardener removing the branches that bears no fruit and the rest is pruned so that it becomes more fruitful. Pruning is the work of cleansing and Jesus disciples need to be connected to the vine, for living apart from the vine leads to withering away. This highlights the fact that we are dependent on Jesus for bearing fruit. We cannot do it alone. The theologian Tom Wright asks How do we remain in him? And responds by saying “we must remain in the community that knows and loves him and celebrates him as its Lord....we must also remain as a people of prayer and worship in our own intimate private lives. We must make sure to be in touch , in tune with Jesus , knowing him and being known by him...”

But this is also a process that consists of pruning , to enable growth and therefore fruit. The process at times is painful , it hurts , but the outcome is growth and it enables us to bear good fruit. Mike Breen suggests we abide in Christ then go forth to bear fruit , we bear fruit, then we are pruned back and enter a time of abiding before going forth to bear fruit again and so the process continues.

It is intended that Alli will move from curate to Associate Priest with pastoral responsibility of the 10 am service at All Saints. After prayer and thought Alli’s vision or direction of movement is that over the coming year there is growth in discipleship in each and every member across all age groups, that we will all take another step of faith.

What might this look like?

- It may be finding out more about Jesus and who he is
- It may be exploring some difficult questions.
- It may be exploration of a specific calling
- It may be a personal
- challenge around prayer and Bible study
- It may be something that is worked out as an individual or as a small group or as a family

BUT

- It will mean working it out together for each of us
- It will mean that we find a way of measuring/ documenting this so that at next years APCM we are able to demonstrate our growth as disciples
- It will mean abiding in God both within the community of AST and also in our individual lives

The parable of the vine , emphasises our dependency on God and the need to spend time with him, both corporately and individually. We need to be taking this passage seriously , resting in God, allowing ourselves to be shaped by Jesus in order that we might be fruitful in the places we are called to be.

Questions of application

What new steps of discipleship need to be taken by:

- Yourself
- Your small group
- The Church family

Final Prayer

The prayer of abandonment, Charles de Foucauld martyred 1916

Father , I abandon myself into your hands,
Do with me whatever you will.
Whatever you may do I thank you.
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me and all your creatures.
I wish no more than this , O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul.
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart.
For I love you Lord and so need to give myself.
Surrender myself into your hands without reserve
And with boundless confidence for you are my Father,
Amen.