

What kind of people do God use?

The answer is, of course, all kinds.

And although sometimes it appears that God calls the most unlikely people to His service, He uses all who will listen for His call and be ready to do His will, to forward His Kingdom.

The writer D.L.Moody says that Moses spent 40 years thinking that he was somebody, 40 years thinking that he was nobody and 40 years discovering what **God could do with a nobody.**

For years my father regretted that God spoke to him, called him to His service, only after he had been badly crippled as a result of a coal mining accident.

“Why oh why didn’t he call me when I was young and fit” he would ask.”How much more I could have done for Him” Later he would say that God probably did call him but he was too busy being young and fit to hear.

At the height of the Civil Rights Movement the “Love Cemetery, a 175 year old , slavery and African-American burial ground in rural Texas was locked.

For 40 years the descendants of those buried there, had been denied access. Then the writer China Galland together with two local women, Nuthel Britton and Doris Vittatoe started a movement to have the cemetery reopened, restored and reconsecrated. Ordinary women, women with no status or authority in their community, but with a passion which urged them to continue to fight for this project.

As they worked they uncovered a long history of mistreatment and exploitation. But this was hardly the time or the place to share their findings, to re open old wounds and hatreds, to add fire to an already volatile situation, at least that is what one might think. However their commitment to this project surprisingly created a multi racial community eager to put things right.

The motives of the women were fired by a desire for justice, for justice to be seen to have been done, however long it had been in coming.

This love of justice and their selfless act fired a spark in a community not generally known for its racial harmony.

Unexpected people, ordinary people, driven by love, doing God’s will , bringing about a reconciliation of His people.

The impact of those women in Texas, by their simple act of love of justice brought together a community in a way that nothing else had or possibly could have.

As Henri Nouwen wrote:

“There is no clearer way to discern the presence of God’s spirit than to identify those moments of healing, restoration and reconciliation. Whenever the Spirit works, divisions vanish and inner as well as outer unity manifests itself.

God speaks to us all of the time, but so often we don’t hear Him, don’t listen to His call, don’t chose to respond, well maybe just not at this particular time.

Does God need us to answer? It appears that He does.

In Matthew chapter 16 we read of Peter claiming that Jesus was the Messiah, and Jesus stating that Peter was the rock on which He would build His church, yet by the time we get to Matthew 26 Peter had denied that he even knew Jesus, swore that he didn't know Him: "I swear that I am telling the truth,

I do not know that man"

A huge denial, one we are familiar with, shocked by, "how could he do that to Jesus, how could he have betrayed His trust" .yet how often do we, by our deafness or indifference, because of lack of time in our busy lives, '**not know that man**'.

Yet in spite of Peter's denial, in spite of Peter's primary concern being for his own preservation, his own safety, - for all this manifestation of human frailty, Jesus used Peter to further His Kingdom. **God used all kinds of people.** Human beings with human failings.

Jesus said "do not judge others and God will not judge you"

There are a number of instances in the Bible of God using people who start off being the "bad guys" like Saul, or Jacob but God had chosen them and He waited until He deemed that they were ready for Him to use them for His purpose, ready for them to further His kingdom.

In Luke's Gospel we hear of Jesus healing ten men, but the only one of them to return to Jesus to thank him was a despised Samaritan, and we are all familiar with the parable of the other Samaritan, the good Samaritan. Unexpected outcomes brought about by unexpected people.

In fact, Luke's gospel includes many instances of those rejected by society, - tax collectors, sinner and prodigals to whom Jesus speaks, - lost sheep who Jesus brings back to His fold.

Someone once said that the disciples themselves were a **motley crew**, all different from one another, with different personalities, and different ideas. Yet Jesus was willing to entrust the future of His message, His ministry to those people. There is after all a certain richness in diversity and this applied then as it does now.

According to Catherine Marshall in her book "The Helper" there are two kinds of Christians, those who have God **beside** them and those who have the Lord Jesus **in** them, and they are ones who have accepted the gift of the Holy Spirit.

D.L. Moody almost echoes that thought, as he suggests that "to some extent the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer but it could be that not all have the gift of the Holy Spirit for service, not all have sought the gift"

Thought provoking statements.

Obedience to God's voice would seem to be a prerequisite to be called to service in His name and so it seems, is the need to tell God that we are available.

As a famous hymnist wrote *...here I am Lord, I have heard You calling in the night, I will go Lord where You lead me.*

Acts chapter 5 tells us that "The Holy Spirit is God's gift to those who obey Him" Jesus had constantly told his disciple that He eventually would have to leave them, but, he assured them, when that day came, He would endow them with a blessed gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus urged them not to work on His behalf until they had received this gift, until they had been "commissioned for service" so to speak. How frightening this must have been for those who were, for the most part, humble people. Left alone so it must have seemed. They were already intimidated by the Jewish hierarchy who had seen Jesus as a threat to their authority. Would they, His followers, now be seen as a threat? How difficult to know what Jesus meant, what he expected of them once they were left without Him. It wasn't until they received that promised power, that out pouring of the Holy Spirit, did they understand what Jesus had meant. They were **not alone**, He would always be with them, not in the flesh but by the Holy Spirit. As He is with us today, whatever our uncertainties about our ability to serve Him.

We cannot do it alone it is only by accepting and embracing the Holy Spirit can we be one of the kinds of people that God uses, one of His commissioned servants.

We all have gifts that we can offer for service. Sometimes we may not recognise these gifts as being of any value until a situation occurs and we think '**I could do that if it will help**'. It is being open to God's call. willing to answer God's call.

At this anxious time when it has not been possible to meet together in our Church as a congregation, we have all been given a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our diversity, a chance for us to help each other discover, develop and use our gifts and talents. We have seen so many examples of people answering the challenge and so ensuring that a church service is available every Sunday even though it is not the conventional face to face gathering. People have been willing to take time out of their busy lives to record hymns, and prayers, bible readings, and reflections, all of which have been brought together by the expertise of those with the technical skills, to create a Sunday service and present it as a whole.

Such a wonderful example of the richness in diversity. We may not all be the same, we may all have our own ideas, but as long as we are willing to support each other, to see each other as a necessary part of a whole, we are following God will.

Love is the governing principle in all we do in His name, *Love one another Jesus said, So all people will know that you are my disciples"*

I have used this analogy before but I think that it is worth repeating as it describes the idea of Christian love and fellowship:

Some one wrote that a Christian community can be likened to the magnificent giant redwood trees of California. Those trees grow tall and strong, taller and bigger than most trees, but surprisingly, their roots are shallow. If one should stand alone it could be in danger of falling, if it were subjected to rough weather, or threatened by unexpected winds or storms, but fortunately they usually grow close together, keeping each other upright and safe. We too, as Christians are less frail, less likely to fail, and more likely to flourish, if we have the support and fellowship of our Christian brothers and sisters.

And we know too, that the ultimate support comes with the promise to those whom God has called, He said **“I am with you, we will work the road together”**

This alternative form of worship which recent circumstances have obliged us adopt, has not been to everybody's taste, has maybe shaken us out of a familiar and comfortable zone, but it has had the added benefit of mission, of sending God's message into the community.

There have been many encouraging reports that some people who may have been reluctant, for a variety of reasons, to enter a Church, have enjoyed our on-line Sunday Services from the safety and comfort of their own home.

God is also the master of silver linings.

The only way we are able to communicate with God, to tell of our willingness to enter His service, is through prayer. God's giving cannot be separated from our asking, God, it seems, need our prayers, it is a two way communication.

I will end with a thought from Galatians ch.6 verse 9

“Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap --if we don't grow weary”

AMEN

Sunday Service 23rd. August 2020