

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups. Nov 27th 2005

Whose Life is it anyway? Called to give

Acts 4.23-37



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

This week we draw to a close our autumn series on God's call on our church and on our lives 'Whose Church' and 'Whose life is it anyway?' Over the last three months we have revisited the heart of our vision here - our call to love God, love one another and to love the world; we have been challenged by Jesus to follow him and seen how this might work out in key areas of our lives. The 'golden thread' running through this term has been the book of Acts - described by J.B. Phillips with the following "to put it shortly the lasting excitement which follows the reading of the book is that the thing works! The fresh air of heaven blows gustily through these pages."

Back in September we began with the first picture of the Church painted by Luke in Acts 2 (42-47), today we finish with the second in Acts 4 (32-37) and what a picture is painted for us! Fresh from a prayer meeting which shook the room, filled with the Holy Spirit, this Church was infused with a spirit of giving, boldness and love. They loved God – see the believers prayer (4:23 -31), they loved the lost - see Acts 5.12 -14 and they loved one another with a solidarity of love that was to turn the pagan world upside down.

There are three hall marks of this church are evident in our passage today.

1 Unity "All the believers were one in heart and mind." All 3,000+ of them!

Our Unity at St. Paul's is best expressed through our statement of vision and purpose:

...taking our commission from Jesus to 'go make disciples' we are:

Passionate about loving God - called to worship

Committed to loving one another - called to community

Convinced of the urgency of loving all in God's world - called to mission

At St. Paul's we believe that God calls us to 'love', fills us with his Spirit and challenges us to 'go!'

2 Community "no-one claimed that any of his possessions was his own but they shared everything they had." As Luke expresses in Acts 2.44 "they had everything in common." Acts goes on to make it clear that although the disciples did not renounce the things they owned in favour of common ownership, such was their love for one another that in heart and mind they considered what they owned as being available to one another as there was need.

3 Generosity – read v 34 -37. What an encouragement Joseph was...so much so, that he was renamed Barnabas – son of encouragement! George Carey when a vicar oversaw the renewal of the vision, life and buildings of St Nicholas Church Durham and described the key as being a release of a spirit of generosity in the church. Next year we begin a stewardship campaign here at St. Paul's that will see each of us called to consider how we will give to God's work here amongst us. The PCC have set up a Stewardship Team to guide and help us with the significant opportunities and challenges as we seek to finance and resource all that God is calling us to.

Unity, Community and Generosity – may our Church reflect the hall marks of the first Church in Acts 4.



Witness: Questions to discuss

1. Do you think that the UK is a Christian or pagan society? (Pagan: heathen, one who is not a Christian, Jew or Muslim; one who has no religion; one who sets a high value or sensual pleasure. *Chambers Dictionary*.)

2. Would you describe our church, your small group as being "united in heart and mind?"
If so what are you united in heart and mind about?

3. How does our church's vision statement and purpose impact you/your group?

4. How does our love for God, for each other affect our attitude towards money/our possessions?

5. What do you understand by 'a spirit of generosity?'