

St Paul's Dorking Small Groups: 30 October 2005

Whose life is it anyway? Called to be part of one family

Acts 11:19-26 Luke:9: 57-62



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

The Global mission begins: From the old family to the new family:

The key expression at the end of the last paragraph was "to the gentiles also" (v18), the key expression of our passage today is "to the Greeks also" (v19). The addition of "also" in both verses is important. It was not that the evangelisation of the Jews must stop but that the evangelisation of the Gentiles must begin. As Paul was later to write, the gospel was intended...

"First for the Jew, then for the gentile" Rom 1:16

This new outreach took place in Antioch and no more appropriate place could be imagined either as the venue for the first international church or as the springboard for the worldwide Christian mission. Although Antioch was a Greek city by foundation its population estimated at 500,000 was very cosmopolitan. Thus Greeks, Jews, Orientals, and Romans formed the mixed multitude of what Josephus called "the third city of the empire" after Rome and Alexandria

The Greek Mission is endorsed by Barnabas:

News of the fresh development reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem so they sent Barnabas to Antioch check it out! On his arrival he immediately saw for himself the "evidence of God's grace". He would have seen the converts changed lives and the beginnings of a new international community. Barnabas gets Saul to join him (perhaps knowing of Paul's calling to be the apostle to the gentiles 9:15, 17 ?).

The Antioch believers are first to be called Christians!

Barnabas and Saul met with the church and instructed them concerning the facts and the significance of the life, death, resurrection, exaltation and Spirit-gift of Christ. Was it perhaps because the word "Christ" was constantly on the lips that the disciples were first called *Christians* at Antioch? Luke has so far referred to them as *Disciples* (6:1), *Saints* (9:13), *Brethren* (1:16,9:30) *Believers* ((10:45) , "those being saved" (2:47), and "people of the way" (9:2) Now it seems to have been the public of Antioch who seemed to adopt "*christiano*" as the most appropriate and obvious name for a group of people who's Christ-centred discipleship was clearly having an impact on the city ... The early Gentile believers were clearly first and foremost followers of Christ!

So you call yourself a Christian?

Labels are important in our culture today...but the label "Christian" seems to provoke varied, and somewhat negative attitudes and feelings. The popular-view of what it means to be a Christian seems to vary from do-gooder at best, to arrogant and naïve at worst. However often the church itself has contaminated the view of what it means to be a Christian with an over emphasis on the routines, dogmas, doctrines and taboo's instead of demonstrating and pointing to, the fulness of the life of Christ..."*Christianity is not a system of doctrine, but a brand new life ...It's not about some instantaneous conversion but the daily process of walking in the footsteps of the master and the living out of the Christ-life implanted within by the Holy Spirit*" Billy Graham

Called into a new family!

Just in the same way the first Jewish disciples had to come to terms with the fact that the gospel was not just for themselves but the Gentiles too. So too we may have to come terms with the idea that Christianity isn't just about ourselves , its about being called into a wider community. We are not called to a lonely pilgrimage of walking in the masters footsteps. But we are called into a community. Christ calls us into relationship with him, and relationship one to another. **Why?** Firstly so we can be the tangible and living expression of him on earth (literally ..His body) and secondly he knows we need help with Holy living!

Questions to discuss:

- **Ice Breaker/Welcome:** Families can be fun...Can anyone share a fun thing that has either happened to their family recently or something that really made you laugh in church recently!
- When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he was immediately struck by the "**evidence of God's grace**". Think about the life of our church and your own experience of being Christian, what do you think might be the evidence of God's grace that would impress a visitor to our church or group?
- What labels associated with the word "Christian" are most familiar, or hurtful to you?
- "**Contaminated Christianity**": Discuss together what you think maybe some of the false expectations, views, or dogmas that have contaminated your Christianity, and/or caused you to strive for a type of Christianity that Christ never intended.
- **Keep it simple:** At its most basic being a Christian is about putting our faith in Christ, and following him. What does this mean in practise?
- **Going it alone?** How does being part of the Christian family help or hinder our walk with Christ? Are we taking advantage of the "*help with holy living*" that being part of the Christian family provides?