

God's 'magnificent 7' requirements for a new minister

Sermon Notes by Rev Will Donaldson at St Nicholas' Church, Marston

Sunday 25th September 2016

1 Tim. 6.6-19

You probably know the story of the vicar who was standing in during a vacancy, as the parish awaited the arrival of a new vicar. And so he was keen to emphasise that he was only a fill-in, a substitute...

Well it is great to be here this morning and **thank you so much for inviting me**. I have very happy memories of meeting many of you at the parish weekend away three years ago when I came to be your guest speaker, and since then it has been good to hear bits and pieces of positive news about how things have been going.

One of the joys of being Area Dean of the Oxford Deanery is that I get involved in helping my churches find a new vicar (when a vacancy arises), and over the past year and a half we have seen new appointments in the Kidlington benefice, at Wolvercote and Wytham, St Andrews, and soon (we hope) the University Church. **I am also well aware that you are in the middle of that process yourselves**, and soon you will be interviewing and appointing.

So I thought it was rather providential that our epistle reading this morning from 1 Timothy was all about: **what does God look for in the appointment of a new minister?** It was Paul, writing to Timothy, his colleague, friend and travelling companion for 15 years, as he takes on the leadership of the church at Ephesus. **What does God require of you? What are the main things that you need to focus on? How must you conduct yourself as the new leader of this Christian community?** And in answering those questions, Paul is pointing us to the key qualities and tasks of a Church minister. I thought I might just set them out for you, because they might help you in your search for a new vicar...and go through the interview process. Here are 7 things to look for. I call them the Magnificent 7!! This year there is a [remake](#) of the [1960 western action film](#) ***The Magnificent Seven***, and is directed by [Antoine Fuqua](#), and stars [Denzel Washington](#). Here are God's magnificent 7 for a new minister:

Requirement No. 1:

1. The person should be strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus (2 Tim. 2.1)

'You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus'.

Grace is what brings us into relationship with Jesus Christ in the first place (Eph.2.4: by grace you have been saved through faith), but it is also grace that keeps us going in the Christian life: my grace is sufficient for you (2 Cor 12.9). So be strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ – why? Because it is where the Christian life begins, and how it continues and where it ends!

2. The person should be an enthusiastic teacher of the Bible (2 Tim.4.1-2)

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, ..I give you this charge: ² Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

In this sense, preaching never goes out of date; we never give up on the sermon. Always trying to be up to date and relevant, of course; always trying to bridge the great cultural divide between the ancient world of the Bible and the modern world of the 21st century. But the prime task is to set out the Bible story: creation, fall, redemption, new creation. Paul emphasises this again and again: 2 Tim 3.15-16...

3. The person should be empowered and equipped by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim.1.6-7)

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

We don't know what the gift was...teaching, leadership, sharing the gospel? But it was a gift given by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12), and the Holy Spirit himself has anointed him to exercise his ministry

4. The person should be committed to prayer (1 Tim.2.1-2)

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

Corporate and Personal

5. The person should have a pastoral heart (1 Tim.5.1-2)

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers,² older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

This is basic pastoral care, revealing a deep love for those we serve: we treat people with dignity and respect, treating them with kindness and love in the way that Christ would.

6. The person should be growing in Christlikeness (1 Tim.6.11)

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

This is our reading today: the call to be Christ like, for all these things mentioned are the characteristics of Jesus. Be like Jesus in the way you behave. It doesn't mean your new vicar will be perfect, of course, but it does mean that he/she are striving to imitate Christ and live a life worthy of the gospel.

7. The person should be keen to share Christ with others (2 Tim.4.5)

Do the work of an evangelist

Evangel simply means gospel, so Evangelism means one 'who proclaims the gospel'. Christ's birth, his life and ministry and teaching, his death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension to heaven and his return at the end of time. This is the gospel! Paul calls it the 'glorious gospel' (1 Tim.1.11). So the evangelist proclaims the glorious gospel! On Sundays in their preaching, midweek in Christian Basic courses, one to one in personal conversations, etc.

These are the Magnificent 7: what God looks for in a new minister taking over the leadership of a local church.