

**1 Kings 19.15-16,19-21**

Then the Lord said to him, 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place.

So he set out from there, and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was ploughing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, 'Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.' Then Elijah said to him, 'Go back again; for what have I done to you?' He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

**Galatians 5.1,13-25**

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

**Luke 9.51-62**

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set towards Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But he turned and rebuked them. Then they went on to another village.

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' To another he said, 'Follow me.' But he said, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' Another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.' Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

It's hot! Even in England it's hot. This is the weekend when many men and women are being ordained to serve God, to serve their fellow-humans, as deacons or as priests. Spare a thought for them as they sweat in prickly and unaccustomed clothes: collars and cassocks and all that.

But that's not the most uncomfortable thing about being ordained. And it's not only those few people called to be clergy who are going to be uncomfortable. I'm not talking about the heat now, but about following Christ.

Fr Tony, and Deacon Moses, and I, along with five people this weekend across this diocese, and thousands of others throughout the whole church, have responded to Christ's call to become deacons or priests. That doesn't make us more important than anyone else; it doesn't mean that our calling is any more important than yours or yours or his or hers.

The only call that matters is the call of God. And how we respond to it. Some of you are soon to respond to that call by being baptised, or confirmed, when Bp David visits this church again. Many of us have already been baptised – perhaps when we were too young to remember what was happening.

In every case God is calling us to follow him. That following doesn't stop when we are baptised, or confirmed, or ordained: we're called to follow continually, always being drawn on by the love of God to serve God in new ways. And it's not always comfortable.

Jesus responded to God's call in the most radical way possible. He turned his back on the comforts of home and the support of his family, to preach the Word of God across the land. That wasn't a comfortable task. It brought him into conflict with powerful enemies. It meant that he had nowhere he could call home.

As he travelled with his disciples throughout the land, he sent 'messengers ahead of him' to find some communities where he would be welcome. They come to a Samaritan village. As we know from the parable of the Good Samaritan, Samaritans were regarded with suspicion by orthodox Jews. Maybe Jesus's companions thought that as their Lord had had good things to say about Samaritans (or one of them at least) the Samaritans would welcome Jesus even if they didn't like most Jews. But clearly they didn't. They saw Jesus and his fellow-Jews as 'those others'; that group they had been brought up to fear and keep at

arms length. Even though they had far more in common with each other than things that made them different.

Jesus though strongly rebuked his disciples who wanted to call down fire on those Samaritans. They had missed the point.

The other day was the feast day of St Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyon in the second century of the Christian era. One of his notable sayings was, 'the glory of God is a human being fully alive.'

Why is that such a powerful saying and what has it got to do with following Jesus? It's because God is calling us, not to anything strange or outlandish, but to be ourselves. It's when we realise our own potential, when we see that we will never be comfortable until we are fully alive, when we respond to that call of God which unfolds bit by bit throughout our lives.

And we can't be fully alive if we harbour grudges. If we hate other people: especially if we hate whole groups of people whom we have never met and simply turn away from them through prejudice.

We're seeing this sort of fear work its way across Europe (and the world) right now as nations and politicians are wanting to build walls and keep out others. Some of you are caught up in this and feeling the hostility.

God's kingdom will never be realised, God's glory will never be revealed, as long as people continue to hate and fear each other. Our calling as Christians is to become fully alive, and to find our true home, our true comfort. And that can never happen if we deny that comfort to any others.

'Foxes have holes,' said Jesus, 'and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' Jesus Christ, even though he was God, never found true comfort until he had fully responded to his call. Which was to show that becoming fully alive meant giving up all temporary comfort and accepting the Cross.

We're not on that level. Most of us need comfort and encouragement as we go through life; we need clothes and food and drink and beds to sleep in. We need joy and laughter and art and music and celebration. All that is part of becoming fully alive and hence becoming more like God.

But we have to remember the cost of discipleship. That God is continually calling us onward and onward and that our true comfort lies in knowing God's love.

