

Thought for the Day 15th April 2020

Acts 1: 13-26

Our passage today gives an account of how Matthias became one of the twelve apostles, replacing Judas Iscariot. It was Peter who was moved to say they should choose a replacement for Judas. We are told that the believers numbered 120 people. By Luke's account, Jesus had ascended into heaven but the Holy Spirit had not entered into them. As a guide for how to take things forward, all that Peter and the others had was the tradition they had been given. There had always been 12 apostles so they reckoned that there should be 12 again.

Two replacements were proposed and the church prayed and then cast lots so that God could show them who should replace Judas and the lot fell on Matthias. As Jesus said, *"You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last."* (John 15:16)

I think there are many people who end up in a particular Christian ministry via a similar route to Matthias. It starts off with a gap; a job that needs doing and nobody else to do it. The search is on. There is a shortlist and the shortlist is indeed short. The church then prays and the lot falls on you and there is no turning back.

Through my role in reader training, I sometimes meet people with a story like this. When they tell me how they were called to reader ministry they start their story by saying that the church they were a member of needed somebody and it became clear that they were the person. The inference is that if there had been no gap that needed to be filled it would not have crossed their mind to put themselves forward. Many fine ministers have started on their present calling in this way.

As our churches shift their ministry from church building to the internet, we are finding that we need people to fill new roles that we never knew needed filling before. Gaps have appeared and people have stepped into them. It's early days yet but I wonder where we will end up 'when this is all over'. How will our individual callings have changed to adapt to the new conditions and how many of these changes will last beyond the pandemic?

Here is the collect for St Matthias:

Almighty God, who in the place of the traitor Judas chose your faithful servant Matthias to be of the number of the twelve: preserve your Church from false apostles and, by the ministry of faithful pastors and teachers, keep us steadfast in your truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

And here is a prayer to all of us as we hear God's call in this new context:

Lord Jesus Christ, you know well my strength and weakness. I come to you in faith to be used in your service.

Let me work within my competence; not reach beyond my ability. Sustain me in your service.

Let me be competent in your saving power; not arrogant in my self-esteem. Teach me in your service.

Let me learn from your life; not lean on my strength alone. Protect me in your service.

Let me be open to your word; not distracted in my listening.

Into your hands I commend my spirit.

Keep me in your service now and for ever. Amen.