

Dear Friend

This message is a little later than usual; Covid-19 is the reason! The virus is very much still with us; the baptism service we should have had yesterday morning was postponed, the live-streaming was unable to take place and I am writing this in the church office all because key people have tested positive! Please pray!

Today we celebrate James the Apostle, who paid for his call to be one of the Twelve with his life - see Acts 12.1-2. He and his brother John were nicknamed "Sons of Thunder" so we can assume that they were both forces of nature! The set gospel reading describes the occasion when James' mother asked Jesus to grant seats of honour to them both. Jesus reply reminds us of the upside down nature of the kingdom - the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve; the greatest must be the least; the first shall be last; the weak shall be strong; unless you become like little children...

It should not surprise us if we find this a struggle. The Kingdom of God cuts right across human nature - fallen as it is - and demands that we change. It took a long time for the penny to drop for those early disciples; once they had received the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the anointing that rested on Jesus was resting also on them, and they were empowered to continue Jesus' mission and ministry - preaching the good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom for the captives. That anointing is still available to us, provided we are willing to embrace change, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, just as they did.

If we let these life-changing truths sink deeply into our hearts and minds, we will be able to be more and more effective in our lives as witnesses for Christ, as purveyors of his grace and truth, as agents of his kingdom. As we seek to follow the One who came to seek and to save, to serve and to redeem, we will find ourselves being used to serve our community of Park Hill.

As I said in my sermon yesterday, the legacy of the pandemic is huge, especially in the area of mental health and wellbeing. We have a wonderful space to offer not just for worship and other groups but as a place to find peace and healing for troubled hearts and minds. We also have wonderful people - including you - who want to offer whatever help and support we can, to enable people to get through this terrible time, and know themselves to be loved.

Let us all seek the Lord as to how we can make the best use of our own time and gifts, so that we may be a rich blessing to our neighbours.

With love and prayers

Simon