

Ploughing your own furrow?

1 Kings 19^{15-16,19-end}; Psalm 16; Galatians 5^{1,13-25}; Luke 9^{51-end}

No-one who puts a hand to the plough and turns back is fit for the kingdom of God. [Luke 9⁶²]

The experience of Elisha, when Elijah calls him to be the next prophet in Israel, would be a bit like the Pope walking through a field and putting his white cassock on you and putting the Fishermans' Ring on your finger.

The thing to note here is that he - literally - burns his bridges. When he asked Elijah for permission to say goodbye to his family, Elijah says that the call is God's, it is up to him how he responds. He kills 24 oxen and cooks them over the broken up farming tools and they have a massive farewell party!

That's the sort of commitment that Jesus is demanding when he engages with those who are his hangers'-on rather than committed disciples.

Was Jesus less generous than Elijah when he refuses to let those thinking about signing up go and organise a funeral or to say goodbye to their families? Probably not! But he was calling their bluff!

An intention to follow isn't the same as following!

Following is:

✠ **A call to uncertain living:**

It has always been something I know to be true - If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans!

If Jesus wasn't sure where he would find a place to sleep or eat, then if we have that we have more security than he did. So we Paul says we have **crucified the flesh** it includes having the freedom to have any certainty in our life beyond faith (and those with good memories will remember that I have said in the past that *faith is the opposite of certainty*).

There is risk in being a follower - but the greater the risk the greater the fulfilment!

✠ **A call to uncompromised living:**

The phrase from the Psalm is always affirming - **my share has fallen in a fair land (*the boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places*)**. But, because we live in that land, we live differently to those who are around us. Paul tells us that we are free to do what we want, but that we use that freedom to embrace what God has for us and that means our morals in particular have to conform to what God says!

As Christians we don't make do with second best - 'this'll do' isn't a Christian thing to say! We strive to be the best we can be, we aim for perfection!

✠ **A call to fruitful living:**

Two lists from Paul, because all our lives bear fruit - it just depends on what sort.

Those who plough their own furrow reap: **formication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, soccer, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing**. Whilst some of these have their attractions, the end result isn't positive, healthy or helpful.

Those who plough God's furrow reap: **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**.

It is a choice!

If Jesus heard us say, **I will follow you wherever you go**, how would he respond? Do we intend at some convenient time to be a disciple or is it already what we are?