

## **Readings: Colossians 3: 1-14 and Luke 10: 38-11:13**

### **Discernment**

Taking the passage from Colossians first, what do you notice about these words? Perhaps at home this week you might like to pray over these passages and see what speaks to you.

What we have is Paul's vision of what renewal in Christ looks like.

We have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed ourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. What a beautiful metaphor. I always picture the exchange of worn out clothes for tailor-made, more attractive clothes that look and feel better.

As our faith develops, as we walk ever more closely with Christ, we change.

One of the things to look out for when I spend time with vocations candidates is a gradual reordering of their priorities and a focus away from *my designer ministry* to a more corporately grounded vision.

In our lives we are asked to lay down many things – not at once – but step-by-step. I joined a zoom call to listen to a contemporary artist's talk this week. Once upon a time, I would have listened and not questioned the content. But, this week I forgot to change my zoom name and joined as Trumpington Church, which was not the best

option given the circumstances and made me uncomfortably conspicuous. I have not felt like this for some time. It also made me wince to hear the name of Jesus blasphemed and while the content grew steadily darker I thought, *I can't do this anymore. I don't want to see it, think about it or be indoctrinated by it.* We change as our faith develops. Some things are incompatible with our growth in Christ.

Paul sums up this aspect of the cost of following Christ and the path of discipleship:

*Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

You have died to self, which is, without further embellishment, what a commitment to Christ entails. It is a perpetual and increasing dying to self which constitutes the road we travel. Paul sets before us a commitment to Christ which is totalizing, reorders our priorities and will make demands. When we are on this journey we will grow in the gift of discernment, which is what today's talk will focus on a bit later.

Jesus also focuses on discernment when he pays a visit to the sisters in Bethany. It is the classic tale of a *doer* versus one who prefers *to be*. Martha understandably gets annoyed by her sister's lack of compliance on the hospitality front. Jesus is asked to intervene but replies:

*'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her. '*

The one thing is to listen to the Lord's voice, and learn.

There are many Martha-esque characteristics about church life. How often do we really listen to what the Lord is saying to the church before we run off to do the next project?

God is active in his bringing in his Kingdom, but are we aware of how this might be happening around us?

If we ask, seek and knock on the door of the Father's heart, we will receive answers and a sense of discernment. The Holy Spirit waits for us to call upon his services!

Jesus makes it very clear that we should persevere in prayer like the person who asks their friend for a loaf after bedtime. The message is: keep going and presenting your requests to the Father who will give you what you *need*.

What is it that we *need* to do as opposed to *want* to do? Is it not better to do a few things well that to try and do all things badly and exhaust all of our resources?

Let's now discuss the Third Mark of a Healthy Church...