



Link Up!

‘The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.’ Acts 4:13 (NLT)

Coming up in September:

On Sunday 20th September, in a change from the previous plan, we will now be looking at War and the use of force.

And on Sunday 27th September we will be looking at the topic of Relationships.

Also, on Sunday 27th September we will be holding our Church Members’ meeting after the morning service. Please bring your lunch with you and we will provide drinks. The agenda for the meeting will be sent to Members in advance of the meeting. Apologies for absence can be given to Janet or one of the other Deacons.

Ordinary people achieving extraordinary things...

I recently had the privilege of taking a Sunday morning service at Parkstone Baptist Church. The passage for the morning was Acts 4 verses 1-22; the story of Peter and John before the council of temple leaders.

As we followed the story, we reflected on the courage showed by Peter and John when faced with opposition from the council simply because they had healed someone who had never walked and then proclaimed the good news of the gospel; it was very tempting to conclude they must have been extraordinary people.

We tend to put the people in the Bible on a pedestal. Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets, the apostles – the great heroes of faith. We say they were different, and God chose them because they were especially gifted, particularly brave, and more ‘spiritual’ than the rest of us. But look closely and this picture starts to unravel.

Abraham certainly had his moments of doubt. Moses wasn’t convinced he was the right person for the job. David was a complicated mixture of faithfulness and failure. Jeremiah thought he was too young. And Peter? Well, Peter had denied even knowing Jesus only a few weeks previously, yet we now find him standing in front of the religious authorities and speaking about Jesus with extraordinary boldness.

It would be easy to assume Peter had suddenly discovered some previously hidden reserve of courage. But Luke gives us a different explanation. Before Peter begins to speak, we are told he was “...filled with the Holy Spirit.” (v8). This is the game changer...

Peter’s courage wasn’t about Peter. It wasn’t self-confidence, or a particularly forceful personality, or the result of becoming a sudden expert theologian. His confidence came from somewhere, or rather someone, outside himself, and this is perhaps the most encouraging aspect of the whole story.

Looking forward to October:

On Sunday 4th October we will continue our Hot Topics series with Faith and Politics. The service will be led by our friend, Revd John Good and will include communion. Ken will be on leave on that Sunday.

Our Harvest Thanksgiving service is on Sunday 11th October. We will once again be asking for donations of food for Poole Foodbank and Lifecentre. Lists of the food items that are distributed through the Foodbank are in the entrance.

After the service we will be holding our Harvest Lunch. This will be a Ploughman's Lunch with a choice of Cheese, Ham or Vegetarian Pate (Mushroom). Please sign up for your choice of Ploughman's on the list in the entrance. One name per line please. Also include any special dietary requirements such as Gluten or Dairy Free. The lunch will be followed with a social time.

On Sunday 18th October we will look at what the Bible has to say about The Environment.

And on 25th October, Ken will complete our series on Hot Topics by looking at the topic of 'Suffering'.

Other Notices:

On Saturday 17th October, our men have been invited to join the men's group from Poole Harbour Church on a trip to Bovington Tank Museum. The cost for this is £19.60 with discounts for veterans and students. Depending on numbers attending there may be a group discount available. Meet at the Tank Museum at 10am. If you are interested in going, please sign the list on the entrance foyer noticeboard. We will try to sort out car sharing to help with transport.

Sometimes we imagine God is looking for extraordinary people to do extraordinary things, and this stops us stepping forward. We think we are not confident enough, not gifted enough, not spiritual enough, or simply not good enough to be the sort of person God can use. But this part of Acts suggests otherwise.

Peter and John are described by their opponents as "...*uneducated, ordinary men*...". They weren't members of the religious establishment with impressive qualifications. They were fishermen from Galilee. Yet there was something about them their critics couldn't ignore: "...*they realised they had been with Jesus*."

This is the challenge for us. Not, "How can I become an extraordinary Christian?" Not even, "How can I become more courageous?" But simply, "Do I spend enough time with Jesus for people to notice?"

Courage doesn't mean standing up before a hostile crowd. Sometimes it looks much more ordinary. Choosing to speak when it would be easier to stay silent. Doing the right thing when nobody will notice. Continuing to serve when we feel tired. Being willing to obey God even when we don't know where our obedience will lead.

Sometimes we will meet opposition. Following Jesus has never come with a guarantee of an easy life. But the answer isn't to manufacture courage by trying harder. The early church prayed for God's help, trusted His presence, and carried on. This seems a good pattern for us too.

We may be ordinary people. We may not feel especially brave or gifted. We may have our doubts, our weaknesses, and our failures. I know I do. But God has always been remarkably good at working through people like us.

The question is not whether we are extraordinary enough for God to use. The question is whether we are willing to hear His call, trust His Spirit, and obey. If we do, someone might eventually look at us and say the same thing they said about Peter and John: They have been with Jesus.

Blessings
Stephen Chaloner

Our sister June Northwood passed peacefully away on 9th September at Magna Care Home. Her funeral is on Wednesday 30th September at 2pm at the Halo Ceremony Hall of Poole Crematorium.