

SERMON 23rd July- Working together!

Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles.

Just before one of the most important things that Jesus did -we read that he "went out to the mountain to pray" and remained in prayer throughout the whole night. Then, in the morning, he called together the large group of his followers and selected twelve to have a special role as apostles, those who would preach the Gospel and plant churches after Jesus was no longer on earth. (The Greek word translated as "apostle" means, literally, "one who is sent," usually with a message or to fulfill some important responsibility.)

The fact that Jesus prayed all night before choosing the twelve impresses me for several reasons. For one thing, I don't think I have ever prayed for that long about anything. Had I been in Jesus' place, I expect I would have fallen asleep.

But, apart from the extraordinary length of Jesus' prayer session, I'm struck by the fact that he seemed to need to pray for so long. I wonder what Jesus was praying about for that night. Luke's narrative suggests that at least part of his prayer was devoted to discerning who among his followers should become apostles. Did Jesus talk with his Heavenly Father about each of his disciples, weighing their strengths and weaknesses? Or did he simply wait until the Father revealed who should be apostles? We can't answer these questions from the text. But what we do know is that the Son of God spent a whole night in prayer before he chose his inner circle, his "team,"

The example of Jesus challenges us to consider how devoted we are to prayer when we have to make a major decision. When we have big decisions to make do we spend the night in prayer? Or even one focused hour? Do we get away from the busyness of ordinary life, going out to "the mountain" in order to be quiet enough to hear what God has to say to us? Or do we fire up a few quick prayers and go with our own decisions? Someone said to me the other day "the trouble with prayer is it takes SO long!"

The Reading Festival will soon be with us again and this year having chaplained at Ascot recently I'm doing the same at the festival for three days- just to show I'm versatile (or mad!) shame I can't wear a hat!

I will be with the Reading Street Pastors and on Tuesday evening during that terrible thunder storm we met at New Hope Church to receive some instruction!

A large gathering of people many new like me waiting to be told what to do- and what did we do WE PRAYED we covered every aspect of the Festival and we continued praying! The Street Pastors do nothing without praying first- Jesus did nothing without talking to his father and he taught his disciples not to attempt anything without prayer.

I wonder why we so easily get on with our lives without consultation with the one who loves us?

If Jesus sensed the need to spend the night in prayer, what does that suggest for me . . . and for you?

Everything we do **MUST** start with prayer!

When we work together prayer must be first thing we do **NOT** when things are going wrong or when we just happen to think about it.

First we need to believe in the power of prayer -it does work- it really does work! But you need to have confidence that it will.

When people are working and sharing together prayer has to come first a common bond between you hence the Street Pastors! When a church starts a new venture- prayer has to come first- Penny at St John's has been holding many prayer times for people to come to pray for the future of that church for its coming together with Greyfriars- God has to be central -we don't pray only when things go wrong- we have to learn to pray all the time for everything.

So we must remember what Jesus said -when one or two of you are gathered together (in prayer) I am there also!

AMEN