

My father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and become my disciples

In the name.

In the list of the worst films ever made there is one genre of film which predominates. Now Superbabies 2, Jaws: The Revenge, Return to the Blue Lagoon, and Highlander 2: The Quickenings may not on the surface have much in common. In fact they have two things, one I have absolutely no interest in watching any of them and two they are all, of course, sequels.

The sequel is an easy phenomenon to understand- we have such an urge to find out 'what happens next'. We are rarely content with a story to end where it does. We demand just one chapter more even if it ruins the story as is.

This is the case even for the Bible. Luke, having written his gospel then gives us the Book of Acts- the what happens next of the church. This is a sequel unlike any other, partly because it's actually very good and partly because it is ongoing. The story of the Church does not end when Acts ends. We are in that what happens next. We are adding chapters to that story. The story of God and his people.

That raises the question of course- who are his people? Well today's reading from Acts perhaps points to part of the answer to that question. We are- and you may wish to look around you at this point- an unlikely people. There are plenty of parts of the Bible which involve people thinking they know what the people of God are like and then the spirit of God subverting it with an unlikely act of glorification.

Today we hear one such story. The Ethiopian eunuch is about as far away from what the Old Testament imagines as being a person of God as is possible. He is from a far off land, not of the people of Israel. He does not look or sound or keep the rules of a person of God. He cannot even, for very obvious reasons, properly enter into the great symbol of the covenant- circumcision. He is a man of power for what is considered an oppressive and wicked regime. He is as far from a person of God as it is possible to be.

Yet, yet, he hears the call. He studies the Scripture. He takes God seriously. He listens to what God is saying in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. And he decides he wants to be part of the what happens next.

What is there, he asks, to stop me being baptised? What is there to stop me playing a full part in the story of the glory of God? And Philip responds: nothing.

It is the fulfilment of what Jesus says in our gospel- the Father is glorified by our discipleship. By us living the fullness of the Christian life, by us playing a full and joyous and active part in the 'what happens next' of the Church.

That is the most radical thing about Christianity- that we, each of us- you and I with all our failings and flittings and foibles. We are in the active process of glorifying God, of adding to the glory of the one who is glory itself. What a calling that is. What a joy that is. What a responsibility that is.

God wants the 'what happens next' to be his continued glorification by the people of God- however unlikely they might think they are, however ill equipped they might feel for the task, wherever they are and whatever their gifts might be. That glorification is to gather more people to know his love, to live and act in such a way as speak of that love, and to know ourselves held forever and only in and by that love.

We still might ask what happens next but that is now a question that ought really be something we ask of ourselves. Not of God. God has already said what happens next: we are called and we are loved and we are given a part in life everlasting. What we chose to do with that, to make of that is up to us.

Think now. How are you being called? How might you more fully glorify God with your time or your gifts? What happens next? Well, that is up to you.

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