



## The Order of St James (UK) Newsletter

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### THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Fr Ed Elsey OSJ

An American friend, like us all, a seeker for truth and explanation - oh and so many of our friends, dear brothers and sisters are finding encouragement from the study we enjoy - asked me if I could explain the complicated message behind the parable of the talents from Matthew 25, 14-30. Read the parable first. Then let's have a closer look at the issues it raises.

It is indeed a curious story and one of Christ's most controversial. Laziness and indolence being punished by hellfire, simply for doing nothing with some coinage, seems out of context with the surrounding Scripture. The Master going on a journey could have been Christ himself departing 'the scene' and the 'disciples being given the charge to preach the gospel and one of them not doing so, isn't really a possible explanation. Talent is a term for a sort of financial 'bitcoin' of the day, The others invested theirs and made a profit for their master: the third buried his and returned it without interest.

There are three evangelical biblical points which could provide a long sermon. I [pun intended] 'don't buy it'! Were it connected to another incident or story or parable, there might be a better clue as to His meaning.

Remember that an ancient audience would, anyway, have interpreted it differently than a modern one.

The parable has typically been interpreted by the Western church as being about proper investment: Jesus' disciples are urged to use their abilities and gifts to serve God—without reservation and without fear of taking risks. But it could be argued that it is all about exploitation. Whereas a modern, Western audience would applaud the first two slaves for trading and investing well, an ancient audience would have approved of the third slave's behavior and condemned that of the first two slaves because they profited at the expense of others. The exploitation and fraud of the Temple money-changers and Levi's [Matthew's] role as a tax collector for the Roman authorities [Zaccheus too] were all condemned by Our Lord, though usually with a question to his hearers: 'whom do you think was.....?' for them to supply their own answer.

Given the 'limited good' outlook of ancient Mediterranean cultures, seeking 'more than one's honest due' was considered morally wrong or at least questionable. Jewish tradition, however, felt God had blessed their every enterprise as 'God's chosen people' Because the overall wealth of the nation or territory was 'limited' and already 'distributed' according to rank and position, anyone getting "more" meant somebody else got less. Thus honourable people did not try to get more, and those who did were automatically considered thieves or 'crooks': To have gained excessively, to have accumulated more than one started with, would be to have taken the share of someone else.

This interpretation of the Parable of the Talents' meaning casts the actions of the first two slaves as shameful and that of the third slave as honourable. The Master was furious with his comment and threw him out 'to the torture' [Hell?].

Many evangelical non-conformists still hold, as did my parents, an old fashioned view of wealth acquisition and creation, which was why they were always 'poor' and dependent upon others.

I determined, early in life, that this position was not one I wished to be in, certainly not in later life. I made the most of what I could save, invested well, got to the top of my career 'tree' and was able to 'stash' enough to cope with my old age without national assistance. [Let us put it like that!!] I have been 'been Blessed'.

A forthcoming lecture I am giving on Skills Shortages, includes a section on this sort of theme. The skills we inherit or find, unfathomable until now, in our character or reserves and can draw out in times like the pandemic are, we would claim, God-given skills [talents] which should be used in God's service to others in need or seeking faith. The good stewards of God's Kingdom will make the most of them, not bury them in the ground and keep them un-valued.

Bp David adds this for me. "I feel the parable in Matt. 25 was given to explain the principle of the Judgment - from one who had been well endowed, much would be expected, and a smaller result would be looked for from one who had received less.

Only he would be punished who had made no effort to turn his talents to account. Christ probably intended it to apply to every kind of gift. Men of wealth, of education, of spiritual privilege, with any kind of opportunity for doing good, were affected by it.

A man must do the best he can in his circumstances, and if he could not do as well, or as much as, another who was better equipped, he would not be blamed. The distinction between worldly and spiritual is somewhat vague in this instance, as you state in your response to the person who asked.

I feel that the man who gives to a starving family is not exactly doing spiritual work, but I feel it is the kind of work that this parable would apply to. Helping someone on their faith path, and ministering to anyone the man sees in 'a fix' is Christian ministry and witness".

If any reader would like to send me an alternative view or extension of what I have written I would be delighted to receive it, edit and pass it on.

NOW....That may be enough study for now. But for those who want a bit more, try this...

Herod the Great issued coins on Roman standards with the inscription in Greek 'heradou basileos' = belonging to Herod the King [link reference our Lord's comment - render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's in answer to a trick question about tax-paying [Matt 22,21].

Herod dated his coins, which were made in Jerusalem and in Tiberius. Roman procurators coined money locally to supplement Imperial coinage, which came principally from Rome., Alexandria and Antiocha.

Local coins were the 'small change'. Their types depicted neutral symbols: grapes, a cornucopia, non-religious symbols that would not anger the Jewish populace even though the Romans themselves had their own religious symbols on all their coins - and remember the Romans were deeply religious, with dozens of gods for all aspects of their lives, and were committed to devotion and adoration to their selected deities. The Hasmonean rulers before the Roman occupation in 37BC also issued their own coinage with their 'image and superscription thereon'.

Imagine the fun had by the money-changers distorting and 'appropriating the exchange rate to suit their own pocket - see Zaccheus and maybe also Matthew [who knew about these things from personal lucrative 'takings' until Christ called him to discipleship. 4% to 8% was customary 'commission' for exchange. No wonder Our Lord upset the tables of such hypocrisy and fraud on ordinary, susceptible people. [Matt 21, 12] Jewish laws against usury [Sequal 1.6.] clearly forbade any of these practices.

The large silver coins, from Antiocha and Caesarea in Cappadocia, including the denarius were supplied to Judea. which was the usual salary paid for a day's labouring work.

The Temple tax, we know, was in line with that until following the AD 66-7- Revolt when it was increased to a half shekel.

The coins paid to Judas for his 'bargain with treachery' were probably silver shekels from Tyre or Antiocha. 30 pieces approximated to 120 denarii, it is thought, but all comparisons and evaluations are conjectural. The compensation paid for an accidentally killed servant was equivalent of Judas's pay-out [Exod 21,32].

The widow's mite was the lowest available coin - a Greek 'lepton'. half a Roman quadrun or a Jewish 'peruta'.

The unit of weight, the talent, was the largest used, was known to the Babylonians as 'biltu' and to the Israelites as 'kikkar', = 'a round thing' or standard weight [from the GK talanton = weight. 1 talent = 60 minas - 1 mina = 60 shekels and 1 shekel = 24 gerahs. Weights in the NT are more rarely described or defined. Matt 25 talent is estimated at 6,000 drachmas.

Mary's pound of ointment in John 12,3 is estimated at 12 ounces - a sizeable tribute and aroma. To Judas it was a total waste of resources, we are told.

Sufficient to recommend more research for those who wish to explore this whole subject further.

I shall move on.

Inflation in Israel on my frequent visits with groups to the Holy Land more recently, was such that we were advised to pay the taxi fare upon entering the taxi, not when leaving it as the fare may by then have doubled!

The only connecting elements of Matthew 25 come towards the end of the chapter. All conceding the Judgment to come.

If you conformed to three requirements: stay constant to personal piety; be faithful to the trusts entrusted to you upon acceptance of Christianity; maintain practice service of brotherhood and helpfulness, then your response to trust given to you will be rewarded.

The 'unsuccessful steward' who buried his entrusted 'talent' in the ground until his Master's return was punished because of his indolence and unsatisfactory 'building' of the segment of his master's wealth which he was, even by implication, expected to invest and earn interest.

But then the whole concept of being thrown into Hell or being welcomed warmly into Heaven needs a lot of further discussion in itself - for another time.

May His Word be blessed to us all, however and whenever we read it. "He that hath ears to hear!"

Fr. Ed Elsey OSJ

# A Discussion on 1 Corinthians

+David OSJ (Wales)

To prepare for this discussion there are a few matters which may assist in this study. The key word used within will be “Disorder.” The key verse 1 Corinthians 1:10. The writer is Paul the time and place of writing was 57 A.D at Ephesus.

Let us start with the **THE CITY OF CORINTH** - Corinth in Paul’s day was the largest and richest city of Greece, with a population of about 400,000. It was a seething mass of Jews, merchants, philosophers and adventurers, but the Greeks stamped their own character upon the majority of the inhabitants. They became known all over the world for their readiness to quarrel, for their vain fancies in religion, and for their moral sins. Due to the debasing worship of the heathen goddess Aphrodite, there was much dishonesty, drunkenness and immorality, and it was against these sins that the apostle so strongly preached and wrote.

We must not forget the Church at **CORINTH**—Paul preached at Corinth for eighteen months, at first to the Jews, until their hatred turned Him to Gentiles. In Acts 18, we will observe that Paul lived with Aquila and Priscilla, and joined them in the trade of tent making. From the light thrown upon the condition of the church we see that the evil practices of the city soon crept into the church. Christian went to law with Christian before heathen judges, the sacredness of the Lord’s Supper was forgotten, the women of the church forsook the old standards of modesty in the name of Christian liberty, and the members were divided on questions of marriage and spiritual gifts. They therefore wrote to the apostle asking his advice on these matters, and he replied in two epistles, First and Second Corinthians.



The purpose - To correct divisions and disorders in the church and to show that the problems of everyday life should be decided by great Christian principles.

**FACTS:—**

1. Divisions.
2. Disorders.
3. Liberty.
4. Supper.
5. Gifts.
6. Resurrection.

**Fact I -- Divisions in the Church.**

Paul here earnestly warns the church against the party spirit. The defeating and disputing spirit of Greek party politics had entered into the church, resulting in four separate parties, each striving for the mastery. The Paul, Apollos and Peter parties each adopted the name and views of their favourite preacher and leader, while the Christ party degraded into a party watchword the sacred name of Christ, claiming that they had an exclusive interest in that Name, which, in reality, is the precious possession of every true believer, 1 Corinthians 1:12-13. In astonished indignation Paul replies, "Can you follow a mere man as though he had been crucified for you? Has Christ been parcelled into fragments? Is there a Pauline or a Petrine Christ?" "Your party spirit is a sin, and all the worse a sin because it is paraded in the name of holy zeal!" Such trusting in human wisdom is foolish, and makes the cross of Christ of no effect. Christ alone is the power of

God and wisdom of God, 1 Corinthians 1:24. Gospel truth owes nothing to human wisdom, but God revealed it to men who were prepared by His spirit, 1 Corinthians 2. Their divisions had made them weak, fleshy and childish, but Christian service is acceptable only when done in the spirit of Christ and for the glory of Christ, 1 Corinthians 3. Paul then declares that the one thing needed is not smartness, nor knowledge, nor success, but faithfulness, 1 Corinthians 4:2, and he then compares the inflated pride of the church with the humility and patience of the apostles, 1 Corinthians 4:9-13.

The greatest danger to churches arises from within, and is the danger of divisions and factions. If two ships at sea of the same squadron are scattered by storm from each other, how can they help each other, as they were so intended? If again they clash together, how can one endanger the other without hurting itself? An old proverb says if we knock each other we sink together! 1 Corinthians 1-4.

## **Fact 2 - Disorders in the Church.**

Here is a case where a member actually had sexual relations with his own step-mother, which was socially immoral even among the heathen, let alone among Christians. Yet the church was so unspiritual that it was utterly unconcerned about the matter. Paul, however, urges that no evil be tolerated among those who are Christ's.

Just as the Jew put away all leaven before eating the Passover, so all corrupt men must be excluded from the Lord's table, for just as leaven spreads all through the dough, so a bad man's spirit is contagious in the church. The church should, therefore, promptly exclude the wrong-doer as evidence that it does not condone the wrong, 1 Corinthians 5:13.

The apostle next urges that it is a shame for Christians to go to law with each other in heathen courts, for in so doing they dishonour God and deny their relationship to Him. The proper way to settle such matters is given in Matthew 18:15-17. The believer should abstain from over eating and drunkenness and fornication, for the body exists not for excesses, but for the Lord, and it is the temple of the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 6:13-19.

### **Fact 3 - Liberty in the Church.**

Here the apostle discusses the relation of the Christian to marriage, and to things offered to idols, and of the Christian woman's head-covering. Some in the church sought to discredit marriage, and would divorce a heathen partner. The apostle however, because of the evil conditions existing in the city, advised every man to have his own wife, and every woman her husband. He further declares that a believer should not divorce a heathen partner, for the association of that unbeliever with Christ's people will likely lead to his or her salvation, 1 Corinthians 7:16.

2 Corinthians 6:14, however, forbids mixed marriages. He declared that when a Christian bought meat that had been offered to idols, because he realised that the idol was a mere lifeless, powerless image and not a god, then he was free from sin, but if his action was misunderstood by those who did not have this perfect knowledge, then the strong Christian should not let his liberty be a stumbling block to the weak in the faith, 1 Corinthians 8:9.

Again some of the women of the church were inclined to carry their Christian liberty too far by discarding their veils, which with the Greeks, were signs of womanly modesty. This created a wrong impression among unbelievers, and reacted against the church, so the apostle argued against the practice, 1 Corinthians 11:5-16. 1 Corinthians 5-6. 1 Corinthians 7-11:16.

It is remarkable that the scriptures do not lay down petty little rules as to conduct, but allow all the scope of action that a devout heart could wish. However, Christian liberty does not mean the right to do as we like, but rather to do as we ought.

Because we are members one of another, and our example harms or blesses, we should not do a questionable thing because we think it does not harm us.

The question is, does it harm younger or weaker Christians? Does it harm the church? Does it hold back the coming of the kingdom in the world?

#### **Fact 4 - The Lord's Supper in the Church.**

It was the custom of this church to eat a meal in connection with the Lord's Supper, and this led to excesses and to the unworthy observance of the Supper itself. Paul, therefore, reminds them of the deep spiritual meaning of the hallowed ordinance.

1. It is a remembrance of Christ's dying love.
2. It is a spiritual feasting upon Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:16.
3. It proclaims to the world, not a new sacrifice, but the ever-new sacrifice of Calvary.
4. It is a pledge of His coming again, 1 Corinthians 11:26.

Therefore, we should not eat or drink in an unworthy manner, and what is very important never eat without self-judgment, spiritual insight, thankful love and holy resolves.

#### **Fact 5 - Spiritual Gifts of the Church.**

In Paul's time some ignored and sneered at gifts, while others thought them to be everything, especially the showy gifts, like speaking with tongues.

The apostle teaches that the possession of a gift makes a believer a doubter to others, and he mentions nine gifts of the Spirit. Gifts like healing, miracles and tongues, we believe were sign gifts (2 Corinthians 12:12) to prove to the world that Jesus was the true Messiah, and that the apostles were His divinely appointed representatives. Man is to believe, to trust, to walk by faith. We must covet earnestly the best gifts, the spiritual gifts of wisdom, knowledge and faith, 1 Corinthians 12:31. Also these gifts must be used in love, 1 Corinthians 13., 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. 1 Corinthians 12-14.

#### **Fact 6 - The Resurrection of the Body.**

Some members of the church doubted the resurrection of the body. Their false belief made preaching, faith, and hope all vain. In fact, no resurrection meant no gospel. The apostle, therefore gives the many proofs of Christ's resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:4-9 ; then the order of events.

1. Christ's resurrection.
2. His second coming 1 Corinthians 15:23.
3. Resurrection of believers.
4. Overthrow of Christ's enemies and His glorious reign, 1 Corinthians 15:24- 25.

***Also we shall leave behind our material bodies and be given spiritual bodies which are fitted for a spiritual state. These will resemble the old bodies in appearance, but without defects, and with new powers and new glories.***

***+David Bennett. OSJ (Wales)***

## **'And God made them, male and female.....'**

The first time I heard the words, 'Our Mother, who art in heaven,' back in the 1970s, I shuddered and knew it was just 'wrong'. Little did I realise it would herald the chaos of today regarding sexuality and gender, and if I had, my reaction would have been very different to the silent annoyance I felt at the time.

'Our Mother' was the first public warning shot things were going wrong in 'the church' - theologians had begun to suggest that God was simultaneously both male and female, gender non-specific, sexually neutral, and this did not sit well with the understanding I had. I couldn't see what the problem was. The bible calls God 'Our Father' and it was His choice rather than ours. He could be who or whatever he wanted to be. He chose what He chose.

It was a very specific and deliberate choice, carefully thought through, and it permeates through every part of the bible. There was purpose and reason.

'Our Father.....', the opening words to the prayer Jesus taught us. There was that same purpose and reason again. So why this challenge, and why now?

'Our Mother' was a direct and deliberately confrontational challenge to theological orthodoxy and was born out of Women's Liberation, the feminist movement which saw men as a repressive threat to female independence. But where do you go next from having made such a defiant challenge?

For women, there was a dichotomy that needed to be resolved – should they abandon femininity as a male imposition, or should it rewrite the rules on sexuality and gender, even though both routes were contrary to Holy Scripture?

The answer, as it turned out, was to do both. That and ignore the church as being a complete irrelevance, especially since ‘God was obviously a misogynist (male)’.

Rules began to be rewritten and even revealed themselves in the small detail of everyday female life; haircuts became more masculine and so did the clothes. There was also a new aggression for ‘equality’ and a rejection of traditional women’s roles as ‘sexist’. Ironically, it took on quite a masculine tone and form.

Behaviours changed too, and I think in particular of the ‘ladettes’, young women behaving like their rowdy and drunken male counterparts in city centres – sadly it was a nothing less than a dumbing down to the lowest standards of male behaviour.

‘What do we want? We want it now!’

Not that anyone knew exactly what ‘it’ really was then - ‘it’ was mostly about being caught up in the moment, the sense of excitement and possibility of change. That is so true of many movements in their early stages.



However, I doubt that anyone at the time seriously attempted to understand the consequences of their actions. As our history demonstrates, that seems to be a lesson that has to be learned the hard way by each successive generation.

An epithet for the human race perhaps?

***'It seemed a good idea at the time....'***

It quickly became apparent that 'God our Mother' was not going to be enough.

'Mother' suggested 'family' and 'children' and 'marriage' and 'responsibility', and the giving up of hard won freedoms and rights, especially in the work place. Not something that sat well with this new sense of liberation. 'Motherhood' quickly went off the menu in favour of new found freedoms.

And it didn't just stop there.

Once one piece was removed, then the downing of all of them was set in motion.

'The church' was far from innocent as it got caught up in this new 'liberalism' and tried to make the bible conform to social changes in sexual attitudes and behaviours.

It failed miserably so it went further. The theology goes something like this:-

If God was both 'Mother' and 'Father', then being made in the image of God reflected the same principles of joint or mixed sexuality so it was ok to be both and be bi or pan sexual or even non-gender specific. Just like God (apparently). If it that was ok then so was any choice of gender of sexual partners so long as you 'loved one another', because God was both male and female, that made absolutely everything ok. And if gender didn't matter, then neither did marriage.

If it meant destroying the traditional Christian view of 'marriage' and chastity and fidelity then so be it. It was all old hat anyway. You didn't need to be married to have children, or even need to have children at all. Marriage as intended by the bible was over in practical terms, mostly because of contraception and the new ease of divorce laws, both things 'the church' had chosen to remain mostly silent on.

It played right into the hands of the liberationists, some of whom were by now strategically placed in or appointed to key positions within 'the church' hierarchies and could force or manipulate change without the general consent of church members. Now it was time hit society with same sex marriages.

Traditional marriage was seen as the last remnant of male domination and repression by women, and an ever present thorn in the side of LGBT groups who aspired to it. Destroying the legal concepts of gender and redefining 'marriage' sorted that out, and again not a word of objection from 'the church'. So if this was ok then there was no need or justification for the biblical and traditional family unit, the bulwark foundation of a stable society.

The only thing left to do is to create 'hate laws' and anti-discrimination laws which forbid the expression of any views and opinions not supported by the various LGBT communities and those groups who may be offended by traditional orthodox Christian teaching, basically anyone who doesn't agree with them.

Thus 'the church' is finally silenced and made to conform.

That is a lot of damage to 'the church' and to society, and the church has to take a good deal of the blame and criticism for allowing this to happen.

In a nutshell, the authority of both God and the bible has been allowed to be eroded, the integrity of 'the church' has been put into question, it has not fulfilled its God given responsibilities or stayed true to its calling, it has not protected the sanctity or unbroken bond of marriage or the family unity, and it has been silent on the binary nature of gender, the nature of sexual practices and abortion when it should have spoken up.

Given so much sexual freedom and the growing use of contraceptives, attitudes towards sexual intercourse were bound to change and new boundaries be established. Since 'the church' has remained silent on so much, it was inevitable that what was previously considered to be societally unacceptable was now going to be the new normal. So what has changed/ what are the consequences?

The womb is now in danger of becoming redundant.

Sexual intercourse is no longer for the procreation of children but for largely indiscriminate recreational activity, 'without consequences' for the most part.

When there are 'accidents', there is an easy legal and state funded solution called 'abortion'.

This began with women saying they had rights over their own bodies as part of the liberation movement, and that included rights over their unborn children.

Thus the law was amended and abortion clinics opened their doors ever wider.

Now, apparently, the unborn child has no rights until legally declared 'viable' rather than from the moment of conception. 42,000,000 or so every year have their lives terminated, the apocalyptic collateral of changing sexual practices and moral standards.

Thus the last domino falls - nothing is left standing, only a trail of chaos and destruction.

***'Daddy, are we nearly there yet?'***

***'Nearly. It won't take long now.'***

None of this fits in with God's plan for his people.

It seems that 'the church' really has misjudged the reality of the situation and has failed to discern well in spite of the writing being on the wall as far back as 1971.

I quote from '[Feminism and the Church](#)' (by GERVASE E. DUFFIELD, 1971):

*'Christians should appreciate that attacks, whatever their origin, on the family concept are onslaughts on the very foundations of Christian society.*

*It is important for Christians to ask if the hierarchical structure of family life is part of the divinely revealed plan, part of the way God made men and women, the way we observe their make up in everyday life, and if so, whether this concept is compatible with feminist egalitarianism.*

*To speak of the 'equality' of women with men sounds superficially very moral and Christian, but interpreted so as to conflict with the divine plan for male-female relationships, it may prove unchristian, indeed antichristian.*

*The concept of 'equality' of the sexes is in danger of destroying women's femininity and reducing them to mere substitute males.*

*Such a concept wants very close examination before Christians accept it.'*

Yet God's plan is God's plan and there is still time for us to repair the damage caused by past failures and omissions if we have the will and desire. Only this time it will be a lot harder.

Again I quote from the same book:

*C. S. Lewis sees the point in his usual perceptive way.*

*Writing of the male imagery of God, and answering the question of whether, if God is without sex, (why) we cannot turn all masculine descriptions of God into the feminine, he says:*

*'But Christians think that God himself has taught us how to speak of him. To say that it does not matter is to say either that all the masculine imagery is not inspired, is merely human in origin, or else that, though inspired, it is quite arbitrary and unessential.*

*And this is surely intolerable: or, if tolerable, it is an argument not in favour of Christian priestesses, but against Christianity.'*

*Lewis saw the importance of taking God's revelation at its face value. We cannot underline too strongly the importance of asking the basic question and in the right form.*

*What does the Bible say about the whole range of male-female relationships, and what bearing does that have on the possibility of ordaining women?*

*It is not the task of the church to accept current fashions uncritically, and vaguely christianise them, but to confront them with and test them by the Word of God.*

*If the case for ordaining women can be made out from the Bible, or even if it can be clearly demonstrated that there is nothing in the Bible against it, then it is at least an open question; but those are the tests, and it is not enough to explain away all biblical texts ad hoc and then imagine that there are no theological objections.*

*There is no virtue in defending tradition for tradition's sake, though if a Christian tradition has persisted for centuries, it ought to make a responsible Christian pause and ask what lies behind it.*

*But equally there is no virtue, rather the reverse, in Christians giving in to dominant feminist thinking if it is in conflict with biblical theology.*

The ordination of women, (a distant consequence of the Women's Liberation Movement,) is still contentious and theologically remains largely unresolved. There is insufficient direct scriptural evidence 'for' or 'against', only hints

The traditionalist argument relies heavily on the Old Testament view of temple hierarchy, Levitical law and ritual, whereas the equal opportunities/sexual discrimination brigade rely on the 'moral' argument.

However, it is not about the rights and wrongs of sexual repression, women's rights, inequality or injustice, or even historic practices. Whilst these things do matter, it simply comes down to a matter of obedience to and trust in God Word.

There are two key elements to that statement:

1. It is not our place to tell God how to go about His business, rather to do what He asks. He knows what He is about.
2. If we pick and choose from the bible, then how can we truly call ourselves 'Christians' when we knowingly and deliberately choose to disobey or manipulate God's Word to suit our own desires and purposes?

The issue is seeking authoritative clarity from the bible, not approval from society. Keep in mind it is God who holds the keys to heaven, not mankind, the same mankind that has very nearly destroyed the world through war, and allowed or sanctioned mass starvation, genocide and environmental pollution to name but a few problems it has caused. A track record like that should ring alarm bells.

Personally, I am not happy with the general cases for or against the ordination of women that have been presented by either side. They both miss this essential point of the argument, but until there is a definitive, clear and cogent scriptural thesis built on prayerful discernment, there is no benefit in changing the status quo. It is a point from which there is no return. Once implemented, it is irrevocable; it cannot be undone or reversed, hence OSJ (UK)'s caution.

So is there any scriptural evidence as according to the Gospels, Jesus did not pass comment about the ordination of women to the priesthood one way or the other.



It might be that the answer was so obvious that it was simply not something that needed to be discussed or even questioned – it was what it was, an unchangeable fact. When it came to the Temple, the priests were male, not women. It was not negotiable.

What he did focus on instead was focus on true worship, something that was more than the building, more than those that served in it, and more than all of the ritual. Take the conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4 v 19-24:

*<sup>19</sup> “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”*

*<sup>21</sup> “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem ..... <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”*

On the other hand, Jesus also hints further at the Temple coming to a physical end along with all the things associated with it, for everything has its own season, its own time.

Nothing on Earth lasts forever, not even plastics.

This thought appears several times in the Gospels. See Luke 21 v 5-6 for example:

*<sup>5</sup> Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God.*

*But Jesus said, <sup>6</sup> “As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down,”*

But whilst it remains, its function, rituals and its ordinances were to be honoured and kept because they originated in God.

Luke 15 v 13-14:

*<sup>13</sup> Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him.*

*<sup>14</sup> Then Jesus ordered him, “Don’t tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”*

There was no sense of the priesthood being made redundant. It was very much ‘business as usual’. And that included the exclusivity of the male priesthood.

So there are hints as to whether the ordination of women to the priesthood is valid or not.

If any more clarification was needed about the matter, see Matthew 5 v17

*<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.”*

This is actually a massively important statement. ‘I have not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets’ – the rules as stated still stand, they are not for changing or ignoring.

Some may say this kind of argument should be enough, but actually it is nothing more than a superficial scriptural knockout competition based on who knows their bible the best. It will never get to the real heart of the matter, even if it is entertaining.

Such discussions should really delve deep into the heart and nature of 'the church', the relevance of the bible and what can be counted within it as God's Word, the relationship between God and man and woman and family, their interconnectivity, the shared and distinct roles they have, authority and obedience and loving submission, mission and ministry, and what the priesthood really is all about.

It's not simply about whether the ordination of women is a biblical or 'moral' issue.

It's actually about the whole package and how it all fits together, and I don't think that has been thoroughly discussed or prayerfully discerned in recent times, or if it has, maybe like Mulder and Sculley's 'X Files', it has been buried because it is just 'too hot to handle'. As they used to say on this TV programme, 'the truth is out there', but not everyone wants you to know what it is.....

Maybe this is a possible reason why 'the church' is in such a mess, why it has lost its way, why it has been silent on this and other very important and critical issues even though it knows the bible is very clear on these things.

It doesn't want any backlash when it knows its views will not be popular, a policy of 'go with the flow' rather than 'go with God!'

If that is so then it shouldn't come as a surprise that people are beginning to see that 'the church' has turned its back on scriptural truth so deeply that it is no longer relevant or representative of the Christian faith and is nothing less than an utter and pointless sham.

Has 'the church' relied too much on false assumptions, that when it comes to their congregations, they will automatically accept 'new and informed' but biblically questionable theological standpoints?

Congregations (and the general public) are not stupid. They recognise the difference between hypocrisy and truth and maybe that is the real reason why the pews are emptying. People are voting with their feet.

Or perhaps 'the church' has simply lost its way and no longer knows what it is or what it is supposed to be doing. That is what happens when you think you know better than God and turn away from biblical principles, when you try to shape the bible to fit popular social movements rather than try to shape society based on biblical principles and faith.

This is nothing less than good old fashioned 'disobedience' and is at the heart of the fall of man (led by woman) in Genesis. Regardless of who's fault it is, 'the church' as an organisation needs to accept corporate responsibility, sort itself out and turn back to God and the bible.

But what about 'the church' at the local level, what about the role of the priest?

Shouldn't they be speaking out when they know 'the church' is biblically in the wrong, or are they more worried about keeping their jobs, houses, salaries and pensions, and as a consequence unquestioningly toeing the party line?

I do wonder what attracts people to the priesthood. Is it because they can't sort out their own faith, or because they feel that if they speak on God's behalf then that makes them somehow special in God's eyes and the eyes of others?

Or is it that need to be recognised as 'a good person', like the Pharisee standing saying his prayers where he can be most obviously seen in all his holiness?

Or is it the fancy Sunday clothes and being able to stand at the front as the star attraction in some strange mystical religious drama and win a pointy hat for being 'a company man'?

Maybe part of the problem is to do with the way we think of priests, putting them on a pedestal, and paying them professional salaries to relieve us of our sins, a problem perhaps of our own making and lack of foresight.

I find myself wondering why priests can't be like everyone else and support themselves and/or live by faith? It's certainly evidenced as a biblical principle and it would sort out the wheat from the chaff in a single stroke! Personally I'd rather have God's man than a company man.

The brutal truth is that **the priesthood is a calling, not a career option**. You don't 'choose' to be a priest. God chooses you on the basis of obedience and will use the gifts, talents and skills you have been entrusted with in the way He sees fit.

Maybe the ignoring of this basic premise is another reason why 'the church' is in its present state – it seems to be full of those who think they know better than God and can fill empty pews overnight, not through obedience to the Holy Spirit but through a reliance on their own personality and self-confidence.

This lack of humility will often accompany this kind of person wherever they go, as will a trail of destruction and failing churches that were once thriving.

Maybe those who should be servant have got too used to being the master in his apparent absence. If so, then great will be the servant's punishment when the master returns.

So how do you test a genuine calling to the priesthood?

For starters, it is often something that other people recognise before the person does themselves.

Not only that, but there should be plenty of evidence of embryonic priestly ministry and a soaking up of holy scripture before being considered for training and ordination. That, and a self-evident desire to serve God in whatever capacity, whatever the cost, no task being too small, living by scriptural principle (not just selective parts of it), and with an infectious and sustaining love of God – but isn't that the high calling for all Christians?

Many intending applications we receive display few of these evidences and are almost always turned down because applicants seem to want something for nothing or they give up because they unexpectedly have to make some kind of effort long term commitment.

I can't always blame them because they are simply the product of the churches they have attended and their bad preparation and teaching. The computer programming analogy is 'input rubbish and rubbish is what it will output'.

Many applicants seem to have the idea they only have to turn up for the interview and the job is theirs because they are God's chosen as any fool can see.

There is a saying, 'many are called but few are chosen.' How true that is.

Regarding the general practice of main stream practice, different denominations choose applicants to the priesthood according to their own perceived needs and own agendas.

And if 'the church' has lost its way, then it (not God) will choose priests who will reflect its own views, flawed teaching and practices, and compound the problem even further by continuously feeding them into the life of 'the church'.

And the more of these priests are ordained, the more firmly they will believe they are right, even unto destruction - perhaps another reason for truly listening to God and discerning ways forward prayerfully.

So let's try to keep things in perspective.

Ordination is not to be regarded as the highest rank of Christian recognition and achievement, and is just one of a myriad of different kinds of Christian ministry which are just as important, if not more so.

It isn't as if ordination is the only form of ministry. Ordination only confirms what already exists. In fact, when it comes to ministry, being ordained may even limit it because of church canon and restrictive work practices.

One of our key principles is that all ministry is equally important and there are no such things as great or small ministries. They all matter.

However, there are some things we are uncomfortable with and have yet to resolve in practice.

One in particular goes back to the women's liberation movement.

With regard to the ordination of women, OSJ (UK) remains unconvinced at this present time. There is insufficient conclusive biblically based evidence to either support or deny it.

Rather than initiate acceptance, we remain cautious and are holding it in abeyance until sufficiently overwhelming biblically based evidence is revealed or discerned to support it. This will not be based on current trends or on the acceptance by the main stream churches as we feel that they have responded according to social pressures rather than true biblically based discernment.

There is also the matter, as trivial as it may seem to some, of maintaining an unbroken line of Episcopal succession that follows the traditions of 2000 years. Once this is repurposed in favour of the ordination of women and subsequent consecration of women bishops, it cannot be repaired if attitudes change. We therefore need to make sure that at least one line remains faithful to the original tradition of the worldwide church as a repository of true episcopal lineage.

For those women who seek to be ordained, there are other sources within the Christian community who do accept the validity of the ordination of women and these may be freely approached. Having said that, there are no guarantees of you or anyone else being accepted as a candidate for ordination. They know what they are looking for in candidates.



Whilst we may not recognise the orders that these churches and communities validate, we will continue to support ministry of all kind.

We accept that this may not be convenient but we find that within the world wide church that even our holy orders are not always accepted as valid by other churches.

We therefore feel the same discomfort that may be felt by those who support the ordination of women, but we continue to minister regardless of anyone else's recognition (or non-recognition), and we continue to be successful.

That is something that you should learn from and implement if you truly believe your ministry is of God. Just get on with it.

Lastly, and this is at a personal level, if you need an official title or official recognition, perhaps you need to seriously reconsider why this is so important to you. Remember that ordination is nothing more than a human recognition and validation of what already exists.

Equally as important, a title or even some kind of official recognition won't make you competent or give you the necessary God given authority or the skills or wisdom you need.

If you already have those things then you certainly don't need a title or any kind of official recognition.

What God has authored within you is greater than anything mankind can authorise or validate. That simply is where your strength and authority lies.

And if you need a biblical precedent, you should consider the work and ministry of John the Baptist.

My apologies if you are offended he happened to be a male, but that doesn't invalidate what he achieved, nor the fact he is an excellent role model regarding what some may consider as 'unorthodox' ministry.

Let your actions and your faith be testimony to the truth of your calling, regardless of what others may think or believe. Let God be your witness and judge and the bible be your guide. Those things alone should be sufficient and enough.

**In summary:**

1. In an act of biblical disobedience and defiance, Women's Liberation was responsible for the rejection of the masculine definition of God
2. and a rejection of 'the church' which was seen as being predominantly male.
3. This led to changes in the way sexuality and gender was viewed and
4. as a consequence, the rejection of the binary nature of sexuality and gender,
5. the rejection of the Christian concept of marriage,
6. the rejection of the traditional family unit,
7. and changes in sexual activity, an acceptance of LGBT behaviours, a redefinition of what is considered to be 'normal' and 'acceptable'
8. and an increase in number of abortions.

9. These factors also influenced demands for the ordination of women.
10. Preferring instead to avoid confrontation and also to avoid enforcing unpopular biblical teaching, 'the church' failed to deal with the issues raised in any real depth, and allowed itself to be led by social pressure and opinion.
11. The consequence was a loss of faith and trust in 'the church' and falling membership, something 'the church' has need to address and restore.
12. Part of this process of reconciliation with society and with God inevitably means that 'the church' has no choice but to accept corporate responsibility and before God seek ways to
  - (a) restore the damage it has been responsible for
  - (b) to re-instate biblically based teaching no matter how unpopular
  - (c) to restore confidence in the stewardship of its God given ministry
  - (d) and to regain the confidence and trust of its members.
13. Whilst OSJ (UK) believes there is clear and convincing scriptural evidence
  - (a) to support the binary and permanent nature of gender and the traditional understanding of marriage (as between a man and a woman as defined at birth, and intended to be exclusive, indissoluble, for the procreation of children and for mutual comfort),
  - (b) and for a complete rejection of same sex 'marriage' (and this includes sexually intimate same sex relationships), 'gender fluidity', and general promiscuity regardless of gender pairings,

(c) but OSJ (UK) does not accept that there is at present a sufficiently convincing theological or biblically based argument, either for or against, to support the ordination of women to the priesthood. Responding to social pressure alone is not 'evidential'. We therefore have no reason to pursue this course of action.

14. OSJ (UK)'s response in no way denies the fact that ministry is given in stewardship by God to all people, whether male or female.

15. Regardless of whether OSJ (UK) accepts the validity of women's holy orders or not, all forms of valid, biblically based and recognised ministry are to be supported and encouraged by members of OSJ (UK).

16. We recognise this is not a perfect situation to be in, but we have a responsibility to future generations of Christian communities to protect and practise sound biblically based, orthodox, traditional Christian teaching.

So what does all this mean for you?

How should you respond?

If it has all been a bit too much for you to grasp or follow, hold onto these thoughts: -

With regard to your own personal ministry, do what God has asked you to do, don't wait for somebody to authorise you or give you permission.

If it is biblical, then it is acceptable, if it isn't then don't even think about it.

Don't let social pressure or criticism push you into doing or saying things you do not believe to be 'of God' or trouble your conscience.

Remember that God is your judge, not man.

If you need 'a title' then you are going about things the wrong way and doing things for the wrong reasons.

+Ian OSJ (UK)

**On Marriage: (source C4M)**

Years after fleeing his native Pakistan when defending family values brought threats against his family, Bishop Michael found himself in contention for the top job in the Church of England.

Commenting on society's current confusion, he observes "if you consistently teach people that the universe and ourselves are without meaning, then it is natural for people to want to construct their own identities". The population, he claims, are "waking up to this wokeness" because an "endless series of victims" is not a great way to organise society.

The preservation of our democracy requires us to "protect certain basic givens" of which marriage and family are 'near the top of the list' says the Bishop.

We cannot leave this to "focus groups", "opinion polls" and "crude utilitarianism", because "the weak will be left behind". The Church, he says, "cannot simply capitulate to culture". Instead, it should lead on the teaching of fundamental principles like marriage "clearly, concisely and intelligibly".

There is “a great deal of wisdom from the past” that we should “use for organising our lives today”.

There is every cause to hope because “large numbers of young people express the desire for marriage”.

People need to “have the courage of their conviction” in work and the public square. Parents need to “organise themselves” and “require the schools” to teach in accordance with their beliefs. And the churches, Bishop Michael says, “should be equipped to support” them.

For further details, click the link below to watch the interview this article refers to.

[An interview with Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali - YouTube](#)

## **Are women now being erased from childbirth? (Extracts)**

Margarette Driscoll

The full text of this article was first published in the Telegraph on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

The extracted paragraphs are presented to demonstrate just how far ‘trans’ ideology has infiltrated our culture. The full article is worth reading as it cites a number of very public attacks on individuals who hold binary views on gender.

[Are women now being erased from childbirth? \(msn.com\)](#)

*They are a secretive bunch of women who jokingly call themselves The Witches – a group of midwives and birthing professionals holding an increasingly controversial view. It's one the majority doesn't dare air in public for fear of losing their job and reputation, or becoming the victim of a social media pile-on. They believe that only women – that is, adult females – can give birth to babies.*

*And, no, that isn't a joke. The bitter debate about transgender rights that has raged across Britain's university campuses has made its way onto the maternity ward.*

*Back in February, Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals issued guidelines on "gender-inclusive language", advising midwives and other professionals to talk of "chestfeeding" rather than breastfeeding, and the "birthing parent" rather than mother, when dealing with trans and non-binary parents.*

*"We are forbidden from mentioning the words 'she', 'her', 'female' and 'woman/women/girl' in our NHS Trust's pregnancy testing policy. It has been erased that only the female sex is capable of pregnancy. Madness," one professional posted last week.*

*A midwife working in a rural area of north England says the "inclusive" trans and non-binary ideology has "exploded", particularly among young midwives. "We are going backwards in terms of recognising women's needs and women's space," she says. "Some of my colleagues seem to have been brainwashed, and now we are all forced to go along with this polite fiction. Last week, I got an invitation to a smear test that described me as a 'person with a cervix'."*

*Earlier this year, the High Court upheld a ruling that Freddy McConnell, a trans man who has given birth to a baby boy, could not be described on the birth certificate as his son's father or parent, as English common law required him to be described as the child's mother.*

*Despite that, for the midwives who support pregnant women, simply saying out loud that it is women and mothers who give birth is now tantamount to lighting a blue touch paper – and watching your career go up in smoke.*

*Why all this matters, over and above the academic and philosophic arguments about what is to be a woman or a man, is that sex difference is key to formulating health and social policy.*

*Irene Garzon, a midwife who worked at London's Hillingdon Hospital and taught midwifery at the University of Birmingham, puts it more simply: "If you have ovaries and a uterus and you are pregnant, you are a woman," she says.*

*That would have once been a statement of the obvious – but not anymore.*

**Comment:**

The upshot of all this comes down to the use of language, the old truth being 'whoever controls the language of society controls society'.

Minority groups seemingly now call the shots, not the elected government. An own goal on our own part perhaps for not remaining vigilant.....?

The fact is that society's attempts to be 'inclusive' has backfired and ended up in some of those minority groups becoming 'exclusive' and society being manipulated, bullied and coerced into conforming with their minority views.



‘Taking the knee’ is a good example. If you don’t, then you are ‘obviously racist’. It is no longer a voluntary act of solidarity but an act of coerced conformity for fear of social or other repercussions regardless of individual belief.

What is plainly evident is that there is presently a substantial loss of balance between the needs of the individual and the needs of society, and rule by pressure groups using intimidation and coercion tactics rather than through open public debate and subsequent legislation.

The reality is that some of these groups only want their views heard and will not tolerate other positions, and this will unavoidably lead to real confrontation.

It’s ironic that society’s attempts to bring about ‘inclusiveness’ is in fact achieving the exact opposite. It is not bringing society together but further dividing it.

It will take many years for HMGov to realise that ‘inclusiveness’ cannot be legislated into existence and forced upon society, rather it is a matter of spirit and will, not law.

One of the real and many threats to society is the growing conflict between trans and feminist groups where there is understandably little common ground.

Given what we have seen recently regarding ‘flash protests’, I can see rapidly increasing publically aired friction between both groups as they struggle to claim their own identities, and ‘the rest of society’ being caught in the crossfire and bearing the consequences when, not if, things turn to civil disobedience and riot.

I'd like to state categorically that 'the rest of society' is the majority stake holder here and, until we are told differently, we still live in a democracy and have the right to free speech, and we need to use it before things get completely out of hand and we are told what we can say and how we will say it.

It's time to say 'Enough is enough' whilst we still have the power. 'Live your life as you choose, but don't try to impose it on everyone else and make them suffer the consequences of your personal life style choices. They have lives that are just as important as your's'.

For us to say nothing and remain unresponsive will be taken as approval.

Remaining silent and keeping fingers crossed is therefore no longer an option. We need to think ahead and think about the kind of legacy we are leaving our children, and to future generations.

Do we leave them the truth or lies about who and what they are?

With regard to democratic process and free speech, we are in danger of losing both if we don't use them.

To quote an inexpensively priced supermarket regarding those wonderfully exciting and unusual items found in their middle aisle, 'once it's gone, it's gone!'

+Ian OSJ (UK)

## **OSJ (UK): Website Visitor Information:**

Total **page hits** to 20<sup>th</sup> July are as follows:

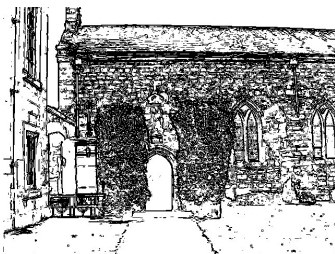
January	17,267	average - 557 per day
February	17,314	average - 558 per day
March	30,217	average - 975 per day
April	45,111	average - 1,455 per day
May	56,415	average - 1,820 per day
June 30,329	43,392	average - 1,381 per day
July (projected)	49,294	based on daily average
		-1,590 per day

Total **visitors** since 03/09/2013 to 20/7/2021 from 243 countries recorded is

Counter 1: 4,269,805 visitors

Counter 2: 5,002,159 visitors

*(We run two counters for comparison purposes as they record hits differently. We publish the lower figures as a matter of course on a regular basis but show the higher figures on this occasion to show that there are statistical discrepancies.)*



**St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle,  
Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ**



**OSJ (UK) Services, 2021.**

Unless otherwise stated:

**Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.**

Services take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting 20-30 minutes.

**Covid-19 precautions: St Leonard's will remain closed until restrictions are fully lifted.**

3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2021

7<sup>th</sup> February, 2021

7<sup>th</sup> March, 2021

4<sup>th</sup> April, 2021

2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2021

6<sup>th</sup> June, 2021

4<sup>th</sup> July, 2021

1<sup>st</sup> August, 2021

5<sup>th</sup> September, 2021

3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2021

7<sup>th</sup> November, 2021

5<sup>th</sup> December, 2021

17<sup>th</sup> January, 2021

21<sup>st</sup> February, 2021

21<sup>st</sup> March, 2021

18<sup>th</sup> April, 2021

16<sup>th</sup> May, 2021

20<sup>th</sup> June, 2021

18<sup>th</sup> July, 2021

15<sup>th</sup> August, 2021

19<sup>th</sup> September, 2021

17<sup>th</sup> October, 2021

21<sup>st</sup> November, 2021

19<sup>th</sup> December, 2021

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.

There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed, only to treat with due respect.

All are very welcome and all may receive regardless of tradition or denominational background.

**Additional Services:**

Remembrance Sunday: 7<sup>th</sup> November 10.35 a.m.

Midnight Mass: 24<sup>th</sup> December 11.20 p.m.