

Vocation has a ring to it.

(from Vocation Sunday)

There have been many words written on the strands of theological thinking and imagery that are woven into "The Lord of The Rings". Much has been said about theme of vocation within the books, particularly that of Frodo the Ringbearer. Look deeper and there is another, subtler vocation.

Frodo is accompanied on his quest by Samwise Gamgee. On one level the relationship between Sam and Frodo seems clear cut, Frodo is the Ring Bearer, the one with the calling or vocation. Sam is his servant. Go back to the beginning of the story and you see that Sam too receives a direct "calling". It is the Wizard Gandalf who starts Frodo on his quest to save Middle Earth by destroying the Ring. It is Gandalf who warns Sam "Don't you leave him". Gandalf seems to know that Sam and what he is called to do is just as necessary to the Salvation of Middle Earth as Frodo's task. Sam is to support Frodo in his task.

It's Sam who finds water in Mordor when Frodo's energy is exhausted, Sam who denies himself food in order that Frodo might eat., Sam who faces his fears and rescues Frodo from the Orcs. It's Sam who takes and guards the Ring whilst Frodo is in the hands of the Orcs, and it's Sam who gives the ring back to the Ring

bearer without jealously coveting the Ring, understanding where his role or calling ends and Frodo's begins. It is Sam who, when Frodo can go no further, carries Frodo and his burden.

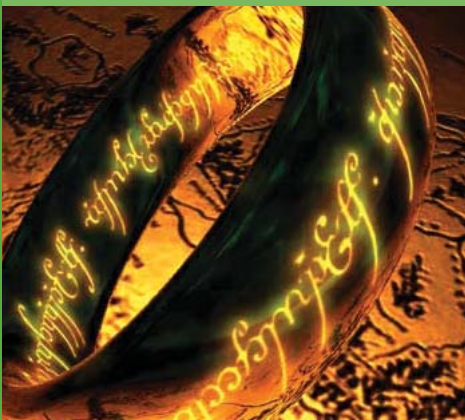
A vocation does not have to mean a call to a centre stage ministry. A calling to an enabling or supportive ministry is just as valid as a call to be a Bishop. Frodo could not have completed his task if Sam had not fulfilled his calling and supported him. With out those called to take on the smaller, behind the scenes roles the larger tasks fail. Church cleaning, making the decision to buy the fairly traded coffee, giving up time to hear a child read at school, going shopping for your elderly neighbour, putting together church flower rotas may seem unglamorous and don't have a high profile, but they play an essential part in the Churches ministry. A calling to an enabling ministry is a vocation in itself and for those called to it a way of stewarding God given talents and abilities. Without people called to this kind of enabling ministry the ministry of the church as a whole would grind to a halt.

As Frodo's servant, Sam ministers to Frodo's basic needs for food, water and comfort. We are all called as Christians to minister to each other as servants of the Kingdom. Do we take that calling

seriously? Does it go with us to the offices, schools, hospitals and other places where we work and into our communities where we live? Do we live out the Gospel values in our everyday life? Do we let them effect the way we deal with our colleagues and the people our lives and work bring us into contact with? The ritual of foot washing on Maundy Thursday is there to remind us that Jesus recognised the call to be the servant of others.

Even the strongest of us need support at times. After Jesus was tempted by the Devil in the wilderness Matthew tells us "angels came and ministered to him". How open are you to be ministered to? Sam was called to support Frodo as part of a greater plan. If you refuse supportive ministry from others, are you denying them their vocation and their part in God's plan.?

The interdependence of the body of Christ is a strength to be drawn on, not a weakness. As St Paul says "God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts of that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that all parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it". (1 Cor 12:24-25)



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