

**Sermon notes for 10.0 am  
April 13th 2008**

**The third mark of a healthy church: seeks to find out what God wants.**

**Gospel** reading: John 10 vs 1 - 10

**Finding out what God wants is:**

difficult  
open to abuse by manipulative people  
very counter cultural  
done by many different methods  
always a mark of God's grace

**So we have some tried and true ways:**

studying scripture  
praying  
looking at what God is sending us, and where he is putting us. listening to the words of the wise and the saintly  
reading our situation and context with God's eyes

This mark is talking about **communal** finding out and equates searching out God's will for us with finding our **vocation**, our **vision** and our **mission priorities**.

First of all God's will may not be at all what we expect.  
Actively to find our vocation in our context, to formulate or catch the vision we are meant to run with means being very empty before God, perhaps for a long time.  
We can't think what we ought to be doing and then present a plan to God for him to tell us how good it is. In this respect business models don't work.

**Vocation:**

to be shepherds?  
of the good variety and salt and light and.....  
what do shepherds do in Newnham?  
Using today's gospel on its own might be misleading, but there may be someone or some people who could go from there and hear a hint of what God is calling us to do

How many of us really believe that God has purposely gathered exactly who he wants at St Mark's today but we can look at who he is sending altogether there may be clues or even assignments there just waiting for us to get on with

**Vision:**

Without vision the people perish  
not just the people who don't grapple until they find and follow a vision but also those whom the vision was supposed to serve.  
We have a statement, a vision to be the people of God for the people of Newnham.. along with others we are the face of God for the people of Newnham... and eyes, legs arms, etc. this is a bit staggering but it is so

**Mission priorities:**

How comfortable this can make us but how dangerous it can be if we are not listening to God  
Experience tells me that whenever my mission is clear God is about to put a stop to that because it isn't quite what is needed  
Our vocation and vision should lead naturally into what our mission priorities are ... if we are listening

(The story of the shoes)

**Sacrifices:**

overtone of being thrifty and of WW2 savings and shortages cloud our collective thinking .... such virtues not intrinsically bad but where vision and vocation go hand in hand then sacrifice is almost automatic and may hurt but will be joyful as well.

In conclusion:

we can't afford to be in any way complacent .. what God wanted us to do last week or last year or when St Mark's was built may very well have changed.

God is dynamic even while he is in the silence and stillness of prayer and he is in both the order and beauty of the natural world as well as in the chaos and mayhem that we create

wherever we are lead and whatever we find our vision to be we need not be afraid, but excited and ready to get on with it.