

Sermon Summary
3rd after Epiphany
22nd January 2012

- Mark 1:14-20 conveys a sense of urgency: everything happens immediately. This continues throughout the gospel.
- 1Cor 7:29-31 is an odd little passage, but it shares that sense of urgency. A sense of urgency which demands a focused response from the Christians at Corinth.
- Some research I have been doing on the church at Corinth suggests that the city had a total population of 80,000 or so in the city, its suburbs and rural areas.
- The young church there probably was no more than 200 hundred or so in number- able to fit into one of the largest houses in the city (Romans 16:23).
- Compare that number to our situation in Newcastle/Lake Macquarrie. Even the total of Anglicans alone at worship is a big percentage than the whole Christian presence in Corinth.
- Given that sociologists will tell us that we are at a different point in a lifecycle, there is a message of hope: that it is possible for the gospel to be passed on even by a much smaller percentage of the total population.
- We also should remember Roland Allen's advice: Paul evangelised in places that had no spiritual advantages over our own times and places. We cannot blame our failure on our context.
- Perhaps we need to look at the kind of church we are trying to sustain: the demand for full parochial cover, stipendiary clergy, accompanying buildings and diocesan structures should ask whether or not our model of church is what is unsustainable rather than Church itself?
- What matters is that Christ is preached in word and sacrament, not a specific how- and I say that as one with a great love of traditional church, buildings, ritual etc.
- We are supposed to be moving away from a Constantinian model of church (the kind supported for its own ends by the Roman Empire) back to a more apostolic church. I am not sure that we are really doing that as we struggle to breathe life into the old (and not so old) structures and shapes of Anglicanism...
- Such a church will look very different from the one we have inherited- but will need to share the Corinthians' and Mark's sense of urgency and enthusiasm. After all, which one of us does not best remember and value those who have taught us with enthusiasm?

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