



Dear Friends,

Sunday's passage from Luke was a challenging one! Followers of Jesus are told they will have nowhere to sleep. They are told they can't spare the time to bury their parents – or even go and say goodbye!

When I first read it, I thought about all the sermons I'd heard about the Christian life being one of sacrifice; of giving up relationships with people we love or giving up the life we knew or giving up our dreams for the future. Some of those sermons had some value. Some were far too heavy handed. Some were simply traumatising.

Yes, the call to follow Jesus is not easy. This morning at zoom prayers, we read Matthew 10:16-23, "*I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves...*" which speaks very plainly of the rejection experienced by early Christians and still experienced by many Christians today. But I don't believe that our faith instructs us to do the rejecting! We are called to be faithful and loving family members, wherever we can. We are called to be caring community members, to the best of our ability. We are called to recognise and develop and use the gifts that God has given us.

It is why I was drawn to that Old Testament story of Elisha's faithfulness in all areas of his life. And why I love the final line of the Iona Community hymn we sang; "*let my life be yours and yet be more truly me.*"

Following Jesus, I believe, is not about denying our humanity but embracing our true humanity in the light of our love for God and love for all who God loves.

I have in the last week, applied for accreditation as a Baptist minister with the Open Baptists (anticipating that I will soon be stripped of my accreditation by the NSW/ACT Baptist Association). It has meant responding to several questions about my sense of

call and my character and experience and ability in pastoral ministry. And out of interest, I went back to my 2003 Accreditation Statement for the NSW/ACT Baptists.

It began like this:

My favourite theological is about Saint Therese of Lisieux. As a child she was offered an array of coloured ribbons and asked to choose one. "No," she said, "I choose all." This story of a child choosing ribbons speaks to me of wholeness. I believe Christian faith is being filled with all the fullness of God (Eph 3:19)... being fully known (1 Co 13:12)... grace upon grace (Jn1:16)... Mary, in the garden, finding her world had fallen together.

And it ended like this:

As I find my life and wholeness in God, I am increasingly aware of the brokenness of the world. In the years to come I want to be part of God's work of nurturing, healing, banishing fear and choosing all – not settling for a portion of what it means to live in God.

It is a joy to reaffirm my commitment to that call to ministry – and to that vision of ministry – again!

Grace and peace,

Belinda