

So, I'm finally ordained. It seemed a long time coming, with some delays even getting into training, three years training and then a pandemic – meaning that actually it seemed further and further away.

But, now that I am, what difference does that really mean? What does it change?

I don't think I feel any different! I guess I look different with this collar on – but then I am still Sam, right?

I am still a husband and Dad, son, follower of Christ – that hasn't changed.

At ordination someone doesn't change – Think of it like this – when Leah, my wife and I got married she went from a miss to a Mrs. But it hasn't changed fundamentally who she is, but it has changed everything about who she is at the same time. She is still the same person but she also now has a different role, which in turn shapes who she is as a person.

When Paul and Barnabas were set aside for their ministry in Acts it didn't change who they were, as the others laid hands on them, instead it designated the responsibility and a particular task to them and they asked for the Holy Spirit to equip them in this task.

This is what is happening in ordination – Yes I have a position of responsibility but actually it doesn't make me any different does it? I'm not suddenly any better than anyone else just because I'm ordained.

Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians about how we should not think of ourselves better than others just by our own standing, our own ambition or merit ... Paul could quite easily have fallen foul of this himself, he had a particular calling and responsibility, he served and followed in a very unique and important way – but he didn't use this to try and make himself better – instead he used his role to put others in front of him, he served and taught, equipped and encouraged with humility.

Instead, he says, with humility we should put others ahead of ourselves, we should put them into the place of 'better' looking to their interests first, not our own.

This isn't making everyone equal, this isn't making all the same and much of a muchness and removing the unique place of others – it is instead highlighting it further – it is pushing the uniqueness of the other to the fore! It is being their cheer-leader, it is looking out for them, speaking up for them, being a voice for them!

He's speaking to a society where being better than someone else is something people boast in. They boast in their greatness and their achievements and at times, even to the detriment of others.

Instead, suggests Paul, put others ahead of yourself, give them the praise and put them before yourself!

I wonder if there are any resonances to our society? How often is it that the pursuit of wealth, health and happiness is at the expense of those around? The media, social media and even the culture of today all push this pursuit of self, of the individual ...

But we are not designed to be alone, no man is an island! How often do we stop and lay aside our own interests for the sake of the other?

How often do we take that moment to think of the other before ourselves?

Perhaps we do, and perhaps you are someone who does consider others, I hope that is the case – but I wonder what the world could look like if we all did it? Not to the detriment of ourselves, not to put ourselves down, but instead to be humble and to point out what is good in others!

And when they do that for you – when other people praise you for something, or encourage you – then to

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thank them, and to point out that it was so good of them to do that!

It can be a mutual building up of one another! A mutual building up that leads to unity. But not a unity that is “much of a much ness” but a unity that celebrates the “other” the “different” ...

If they are loving and worshiping Jesus – the One who emptied himself and took the form of a slave, the *One* who died and rose again, and gave us the fullest possible example of what it would look like to put others’ interests before ourselves – if they are seeking to follow him in all they say and do, then build them up, encourage them, be their cheer-leader.

We are all called to serve, to serve God wherever we find ourselves and to minister to one another in his name.