

**Charge preached to Pastor David & the congregation of St Andrews
at his Induction by Peter Waugh (February 11th 2012)
A Man For All Seasons (2 Tim 4: 1-8)**

I'm really delighted to have been asked by David to preach this charge. I'm also excited at the prospect of saying something to and about David, when he has no idea what that's going to be. I feel like the best man at the wedding, with all the opportunity that provides for embarrassing the groom.

On a serious note, I do need to tell you that I have wrestled with the idea that this message should be solely for or about David. And clearly it can't be. For one thing, in David Bedford you've got a POGOF (pay one, get one free)! David and Lorna are a team, welded together in the one flesh relationship of marriage, using their own gifts in a complementary way, so that you're getting two ministries joined together like a seamless glove. So although I must of necessity refer mostly to David, please bear in mind their togetherness in this work.

But in a wider sense, today is about all of you together, pastor and flock. It's about the call of God upon a man, his wife and a congregation. So, before I turn my best man's sights on David I want to address you, the whole gathered flock of God, because you are vitally important. You are the reason David is here. As he has told us repeatedly for the last six Christmases 'You are the reason for the Season.' You'll have to get used to hearing that one from now on! Ask him about it later!

Mixed Feelings!

Although it's good to be here, for us northerners this is a time of seriously mixed feelings. We have deep sadness at losing the fellowship of a couple we have known for far too short a time, but whom we have grown to love, respect and trust implicitly. We're deeply sorry to lose the ministry of people whose work has been so effective and borne such fruit. But we also rejoice in the knowledge that God still speaks, and calls people on to new ministries, and that they hear and obey, whatever the cost. I think the fact that David and Lorna were willing to tear themselves away from what is manifestly God's own country to come here should reassure you about their sense of call!!! God is in this; I say again God is in this! Do you believe it?

So no, we aren't here today as a matter of religious protocol. We're here because we love this couple and believe that, to pinch an old song title, this could be the start of something big for the Lord's work in Canterbury. We are here to bless the David and Lorna on their way but also to be in at the start of this new chapter for this and the wider church.

A Word For The Local Congregation

There's a story I love about a Cornish school, and the story makes a good point. It's about a teacher who repeatedly asks his dim pupil the question, "If I gave you 2 cats and another 2 cats and another 2, 'ow many cats would you 'ave?" The teacher is certain that the answer is six, but the pupil repeatedly says seven. The teacher blows his top, but it turns out that the lad is right because he already has a cat at home!

The teacher made what seemed to be a safe assumption, but assumptions aren't always safe. (i.e. Ass of U and Me) In God's economy, 2+2+2 doesn't always make 6, just as 5 loaves and two fishes, *you would assume*, could never feed 5000 hungry souls. God is able to work beyond the boundaries of your assumptions and I hope

you are ready and willing for him to do that here. I don't know what your membership or weekly congregation amounts to, but humanly speaking, you wouldn't assume that the addition of these two souls would actually multiply it, would you? But it just might, and may it please the Lord to do it. His purposes are always bigger than we assume and he just loves to surprise us.

Having said that, there are assumptions you *can* make today about your new pastor.

You *can* safely assume that he is a man of God. In fact, I would say that – like his OT namesake – he is a man after God's own heart.

You *can* safely assume that what he longs for most in himself is that Jesus Christ should always occupy the throne of his heart. Expect, therefore, to see a life that is Christ-centred in every way.

You *can* safely assume that the Holy Spirit and not the flesh will energise his ministry. You will find that he exemplifies Paul's words in Colossians 1:29 "*To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy..*"

You *can* safely assume that he is a lover and student of God's Word, and that the scriptures shape his ministry. His preaching and teaching among you will be Bible based. (As an aside, you may just find that his favourite book is the book of numbers, by which I mean the blessed book of Sudoku!)

You *can* safely assume that in preaching and teaching you have in David a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly handling the Word of Truth. You will enjoy such ministry. You may not always be comfortable under it, but you will be blessed and you will grow.

You *can* safely assume that he will be a loving, attentive and faithful pastor of the flock, but not one who will necessarily keep you comfortable within the fold. He will want to lead you out into those new pastures to which it is God's will that you should take the good news of Jesus Christ in our day and generation. So David and Lorna are a gift not just to this congregation but also to the wider church in Canterbury.

And he will be all of these things and do all of these things in season and out of season. It's always open season for the gospel, and you can safely assume that your new pastor is *a man for all seasons*. So, David, no pressure then!

I'm not saying these things to embarrass or patronise him, but to encourage you and to ask you to take him and Lorna to your hearts and thank God for the gift he has given you. I would say that you have opening up before you a door of opportunity for the gospel in these days that will change Canterbury for good and for God. But David can only be what he is and do what he can do if you are united one hundred percent with him and behind him. This is *not* a call to agree with everything your new pastor says or does. It *is* a call to trust, to stand together with him for Christ, to uphold him at the Throne of Grace in prayer – because in ministry you only get what you pray for – and as God gives you strength, to launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

I ask you today, will you do these things – God being your helper? For you are a team together, pastor and flock. This is not about one man starting over in a new place; you are all now in a new place. So I charge you all to rejoice in it and work together in the paths to which the Lord is now calling you.

A Word for Pastor David

I said earlier that I'm chuffed to be doing this. But knowing how David loves the Lord and how accountable to the Lord he strives to be, I feel rather unfit to give any charge to him. The saving grace is that it's not what I'm saying that we want to get at but what God might be saying. So I turn to Scripture, and to a Word that speaks the wisdom of God into the situation. We are looking at 2 Timothy 4, to the charge that Paul laid on another servant of the Lord, a man called Timothy. And in this, David, I believe the Lord would simply have me affirm your existing ministry priorities and encourage you to go all out for them in this new place.

Now, I confess that David and Timothy don't seem to have much in common! Timothy was a young man; David is clearly a little more 'mature' in years, though don't let the haircut fool you – there is plenty of youthful energy beneath it. Grass doesn't grow on a busy street! Timothy was just starting out and in a sense needed to prove himself in ministry. David has been going for 'a while' and has nothing to prove. His record speaks for itself. Timothy, it seems, was a timid bloke and hugely daunted by the task before him. David stands firm on the gospel, spells faith R.I.S.K. and is up for the challenge.

So if there's no comparison, why am I looking at this passage of Scripture? Because it's timeless and universal in its application. Bible scholar Donald Guthrie said that the exhortations contained in these verses are as applicable to all Christian ministers as to Timothy. Any minister or preacher of the gospel hearing Paul's charge to Timothy somehow instinctively knows 'this means me too.' God the Holy Spirit said it then and he's still saying it today. So what might the Holy Spirit be saying to you today through this, David? Perhaps nothing new, but something affirming your priorities, and laying renewed emphasis on what you already know and strive to practice.

1 Remember to whom you are accountable.

Verse 1: In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge..

I preach this charge today, as Paul did then, in the awesome presence of the judge of all the earth, and I think he wants to remind you, and all of us, that he's the sole authority you report to.

You know, Christian ministers are subject to a welter of competing voices from all sides claiming the right to tell them what to do and whinging if they don't. It's necessary that we exercise ministry in a framework of church authority, and Godly authority is a very great blessing indeed. But in the end a Christian minister is accountable only to the Lord and I urge you to take that on board afresh. Of course that does not mean sitting loose in the saddle as regards those whom God has anointed and appointed to positions of authority in his Church. But it does mean that when challenges come, as they will, and opinions are divided, or difficult decisions need to be made, in the last analysis there is only one judge to whom you must give account whose opinion about you matters.

Living under this principle is liberating. It frees the Lord's servants from the grinding pressure to please others, and from the insidious desire to be liked and appreciated. Jesus himself lived by this principle. He said (John 8:29) "I always do what pleases him." (i.e. the Father). And that's your priority in ministry too, David, just as it is the priority of everyone here this day.

John Stott said this, *"We are seeking to please God, who tests our hearts. No secret of Christian ministry is greater than this fundamental God-centeredness. We Christian Pastors are primarily responsible neither to the church nor to our superiors. We are ultimately responsible to God. It's God himself, no church or bishop, who examined and called and appointed us, who has given us our message, made us stewards of it, told us to guard it faithfully, who goes on examining us, and to whom we are responsible."*

He goes on, *"Now in one sense this is very discomfoting, because God's standards are very high..."* And so they are! They make demands on a pastor's own personal discipleship. Pleasing God, perhaps especially in ministry, is rooted not so much in how you minister but in the quality of your own walk with Christ.

Personal Holiness

For instance, pleasing God calls for personal holiness. Call me old-fashioned if you like. Christians don't talk much about holiness these days and few ministers preach it, but they should. Paul says clearly in Rom 8:8 that "Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God." Serve, yes; please, no.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne knew the importance of this issue to Christian ministers when he said to a group of them, "Remember, your people's greatest need is your own personal holiness."

In other words, what you are with God is every bit as important as what you do for men. Holy living counts. It is powerful.

Personal Faith

Pleasing God calls for faith. That must seem blindingly obvious to any bunch of Christians but it is beyond dispute that a special gift of faith is essential in one called to lead. In his letter to the Hebrews (11:6) the writer says, *"Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."* You have to put beyond doubt in your mind that God is (exists) and that he responds (rewards) to those who sincerely move towards him.

A key part of your ministry is about pointing people to God in Christ, in the sure and certain confidence that he's going to be there for them when you do, and that he's got only good things for them. That's faith in action, but it's more than that. As pastor here in St. Andrew's, I believe it's going to mean having a vision of what God can do and seeing that as if it were already a reality, even when as yet there is no sign of it on the ground – *"Faith is the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."* (Heb 11:1)

Faith like this, and a concern for holiness, are a fine basis for a ministry that is pleasing to God. When the chips are down, you are accountable solely to him for the ministry that you offer. I charge you to remember that it is him alone you have to please. Only his opinion matters.

2 Preach the Word

Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

David, as one who preaches with passion and authority you might think that this

charge is a bit obvious too. Perhaps so, but I think there is a word for you in it, and that word is to trust yourself and your flock afresh to the power of the preached word. Make it the mainstay of your ministry, the pivot round which every other work revolves.

In the wider church, the value of preaching as a means of sharing the good news has been under a cloud for a long time. I have preached now for some 43 years, not continuously of course, and I have seen it happening. We are told that attention spans are very short these days; that people don't respond to long talks; that they need pictures and DVDs and iPods etc.; that the average person needs to hear the gospel about 18 times before they will respond – and many other things calculated to denigrate preaching. I'm sure there is a little truth in them all, but some of us have treated a little truth as if it were the whole truth.

Let me be clear on where I stand. I believe emphatically that God has ordained the preaching of *his* word in the power of *his* Holy Spirit as the prime means of promoting *his* truth.

The Second Letter to Timothy conveys the words of a dying man to his young apprentice. As far as we know, Paul is in prison in Rome facing imminent execution. He knows his days are numbered. This is his last ever letter. These are his last ever words of advice to the one he hopes will carry on his work. If *you* only had days to live and had to get out one last message, how would you decide what to say? You wouldn't complain about the weather or the price of milk. I think most of you would prioritise and say what was most important, and most pressing. And for Paul to Timothy, the plea he just has to get off his chest is 'Preach the word'. His final solemn charge – preach the word. Can anything be more important – then or in our day?

Call me old fashioned again if you like, but I believe there's a special call to you to have this right at the heart of your ministry here as it was among us in the North. There is no greater work that you can do. And when you preach the word, preach it all. Delve deeply into the whole counsels of God. Like that good lager, reach into those parts that other preachers fail to reach. Teach, rebuke, correct, encourage with great patience and careful instruction. If I may say so, I think this is a call for more Biblical engagement than is possible in a cell group, essential though those groups certainly are. We need in addition some serious and deep engagement with the Holy Scriptures, lest we become a people who survive on snacks when the Lord is calling us to dinner.

Above all else, preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season for this ministry.

I Conclude...

There's more than this to Paul's charge to Timothy, but I'm going to leave it there. I've said what I believe the Lord has given me to say and I therefore have no mandate to go further. But if I might dare to speak the Lord's words for Him, I would summarise it like this, "David, you're accountable to me alone, live to please me, put renewed faith in me and preach my Word. And I will do with you and through you more than you could ever ask or imagine."

So, people of St. Andrew's United Reformed Church and the wider church in Canterbury, we love dearly love David and Lorna and we're going to miss them. But we believe you'll take them to your hearts. Uphold them at the Throne of Grace,

thank God for the gift he has given you, get behind them as they lead and support you in this local church, in taking the gospel out into this community, and as I said before, launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

A man for all seasons is what you need. A man for all seasons is what you've got. And in what now follows in this city may all praise, honour, might, majesty, dominion and power be unto our God, now and forever.
Amen