

Rector's Letter - Rev'd Jeremy Trew - June 2021

Dear Friends,

The phone rings: Another enquiry about a wedding. It's the mother of the bride. Can they book a certain date for the autumn? I'll oblige if I can, but this time I can't, the date is already spoken for. 'But,' the bride's mother insists, 'he's a very important person.' So, I ask; 'What makes him important?' She's stumped. I'm not sure why, it's a simple question.



I hope she will answer that he is important to her because he loves her daughter enough to want to spend the rest of his life with her, to support her through the best and worst that life can bring. That would be an excellent answer. I would do whatever I could to help this couple be married. But it's not the answer I get.

Maybe she could appeal to my role as a minister of the church: He is important because of his selfless lifestyle; he gives freely to charity; does voluntary work in his spare time; even goes to church (steady on now!). Being a Christian may be about a lot more than simply being good but being good is not a bad start. No, even if he does do these things, they are apparently not what make him important.

Go on then I will her silently, appeal to my selfish nature, to those things important to me: Does he empty my bins or provide me with clean drinking water? Does he teach youngsters such as my own, drawing out of them talents locked deep inside, or is he waiting at the hospital to offer treatment if one of us should be hurt? I'm afraid not. His importance apparently supersedes even my self-centred wants.

Apparently, his importance is directly proportional to his income. His income is very large. Thus, he is very important. I can see the merits of such a system in terms of sheer simplicity, but in all other respects I think it's somewhat lacking. He may be wealthy. That may mean he is powerful. But does that make him important? According to many people it does. Even in Jesus' day wealth and power were seen as signs of God's blessing and importance and the same is often true today. Even the Church can often fall for this lie and pay greater heed to those with the loudest voice and fattest wallet. When some of his disciples argued about who was the most important Jesus brought a child into the centre of their argument and bid them be like the child. A child in that society had no rights, no intrinsic value, only a potential value if they survived to adulthood and, of course, the inestimable value which might be placed in them by their parents. If a child were valued at all they were valued unconditionally. That is the value God places on us; a limitless, unconditional value. To value ourselves on any other basis is to sell ourselves short.

The problem was not that this woman overvalued her future son-in-law, but that she undervalued him. Also, she should have rung when I wasn't in such a cantankerous mood!

Warmest wishes

Jeremy

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[May 2021](#)

[April 2021](#)