

**UNDER THE UNPREDICTABLE PLANT:
an exploration in Vocational Holiness.
Eugene H Peterson. (Eerdmans 1992)**

Shift from tending the Garden to running the Garden: from vocational holiness to career idolatry, only detected by the serpent.

Jonah uses command of God (go journey) to avoid God's presence (chooses Tarshish!) Vocation offers chance to manipulate people as manager, but it is idolatry – power and glory for self. Devil-worship most often in glare of lights, glory and organ.

St James: 'let not many become teachers' – knew perils from own experience. (Jm3:1)

P15: *The religious leader is the most untrustworthy of leaders: in no other station do we have so many opportunities from pride, for covetousness, for lust, or so many excellent disguises at hand to keep such ignobility from being found out and called to account.* Stabilitas stops careerism disguised as spiritual questing. Let the congregation teach us by becoming what we preach.

Obedience carries the danger of substituting our will, or the societal will for God's 'God told me'.

Most religion is self-aggrandisement, not Gospel. Leader feels good, laity shop around for one that suits their needs and makes them feel good. *'Entertainment with occasional breaks for moral commercials.'*

Most Leadership models either Managerial or Messianic. Today's concern for self is not for soul!

Common peoples' banality is a cover for impressive depths.

Jonah's storm at sea: no escape for any – reveals basic reality of our lives. He's asleep as was Jesus in the boat and both still the storm. Both aware that God is at work, and that's our work.

Belly of the Fish: we need confinement and compression – limits (*askesis*=self-discipline).

Concentration on what matters. Jesus on holy Saturday. Jonah's prayer is no lament but praise.

Prayer: To bring up the water, desires and demands are a sieve. Psalms are real me to God as a daily work-out. (Augustine called them a 'school' – and *askesis* – a Rule) Spirituality is not imposed it must be grown. This requires fourteen disciplines so that God's Word can flourish: spiritual reading; spiritual direction; meditation; confession; bodily exercise; fasting; Sabbath-keeping; dream interpretation; retreats; pilgrimage; almsgiving; journaling; sabbaticals; small groups. Our primary pastoral task to encourage prayer but it is becoming ceremonial gesture. (acting like God, as if we had no need of prayer) Contemplative life as foundation of action.

Nineveh as opposed to the dream of Tarshish.

To see Jesus Story in each parishioner. Not looking for what is not there. “ He is risen.. going before you to 3, Emerton Rd, like he told you.” Gospel is geographical ~ not fancy ideas (Gnosticism). Farmers know that everything has its right size but we try to blow up every balloon until it bursts. Stand in awe before your congregation, yet critical of its ‘religion’ – like Jonah questioning religion of Nineveh. The local also needs eschatology in that it needs destiny, but eschatology without mapping real locality is religious science fiction.

Quarrelling under the Plant:

Anger is a sixth sense for sniffing out wrong, but fails to discern if the wrong is theirs or ours! Best thing about pastoring is ‘the Mess’! It’s the precondition of creativity. When we are being creative we are not efficient. Lovers, artists, poets, all risk, blunder, frustrate, embarrassment. Slowly emerges love and peace. But we simultaneously have to keep the parish show on the road! (i.e. there are different kinds of mess) A programme is only painting by numbers, not mystery-seeking. We who are in the ‘image’ have ‘imag’ination to make connect visible and invisible. No one lives in the objective world but only a world filtered through imagination. Imagination should be in harmony with Explanation (pins things down so we can use them) and so offer purposeful action and roads into mystery. [planning can be creative ~ viz town planner, cathedral reorganisation]

A paradigm shift from Pastor as programme director to Pastor as spiritual director. If so, even though what we do and say is same, everything has changed.

Spiritual direction is not opportunity for instruction, nor opportunity to be compassionate for them, it goes deeper. ‘Spiritual’ should mean participating in the work of God, ‘Director’ in this sense is the alongsider friend – Soul Friend (from Celtic *anmachara*) So our primary task is not communication but communion (pushing past the known into the risky unknown). Enter the sick room and the only words required are of communion. All this flows out of the act of worship/prayer.

Ending: should not I pity Nineveh?

Don’t hear Jonah’s answer. Cf. ‘For they were afraid’. Demands us answer! Did Jonah continue avoiding unpredictability of God and his comic ways with plants and people?