

TFTD R11: Resisting

Today's TFTD comes from the Revd Pam Butler

I have come to the conclusion that if we love God and seek to follow in his way there is absolutely no point in trying to resist his call. Neither, sometimes, is there any point in trying to understand its ultimate purpose.

By nature I am a shy introvert: my natural instinct is not to draw attention to myself. In a previous incarnation I was a secondary school teacher who became a dithering wreck when it was my turn to lead the whole school assembly. You might therefore understand why, when called into ministry I didn't believe the call was to me but rather to a friend. For the call to be directed to me made no sense. My friend was a much more likely candidate.

I therefore called round to say that I thought I had heard a call for her to become a Methodist minister. She was after all an experienced local preacher and I had absolutely no desire to preach. The whole idea made me quake in my boots.

On top of that I was at the point of applying for a post in a school where I was a supply teacher. Failing to silence this inner call I eventually spoke to the minister of the church I was attending. My opening words were 'You will think I have gone mad but...'. That was shortly followed by a meeting with the head of the school where I heard myself saying 'I don't think I should apply for the post but I don't know why!'

God knew why, and in hindsight, I can see why but I certainly couldn't see it at the time. God has impeccable timing and plainly knew me inside out. When it was suggested to me that I test the calling by doing some pastoral work whilst the minister was on sabbatical then my resistance fell. For the immediate future I didn't have to look preaching in the eye and could embark on something that felt much more like me. The pastoral involvement made me very aware of the wholeness of ministry where preaching and pastoral engagement feed each other. At this point my resistance gave way.

Each of us has our individual and collective journey. We are not called to see the end purpose. We are called to journey with God. That is what Ruth was doing. She couldn't possibly have known the significance of the sequence of events that followed from her resistance to Naomi's plea for her to return and leave Naomi to travel on alone.

In our Christian journey we may find ourselves resisting God's call. We may find ourselves resisting him asking us to put our heads above the parapet and speak out against injustice. We may find ourselves at odds with other people who are fiercely opposing us. In short we may find ourselves in uncomfortable and challenging situations that we would much rather not be in. What we may never know is the importance and significance of us not losing our courage.