

# 27 June 2021 – Leadership 4

## BIBLE READINGS

2 Samuel 5:1-5; 7:1-16

Romans 1:1-4

## MESSAGE Leading – mandate and vision

Leaders and leadership have been back in the spotlight this week thanks to Barnaby Joyce challenging for the leadership of the Nationals Party. As has been noted in the media, Joyce is a very polarising figure – people either love his flamboyant style or can't stand his divisiveness and attitudes towards women.



Having succeeded in his leadership coup, a key question is whether Joyce – and the National Party – now have a **mandate** to resist any action on climate change policy and to overturn existing water policies relating to the Murray-Darling basin.

You see, having a **mandate** ... is something politicians often claim after winning an election, even if their party received well less than half the votes ... a mandate to enact any policy in their manifesto. But the problem is that another political party who won seats in the election may also claim a mandate to **block** this particular policy.

So who actually has a mandate?

Both parties it seems ... which leads to a big mess in Parliament.

In the Uniting Church, we do things rather differently. We don't make decisions or choose our leaders based on a simple majority vote. Instead we seek **consensus**, where everyone comes to an agreed decision together, listening to each other and to the voice of God's Spirit. It's a way of discerning the way forward where



even the quietest voices can be heard and where people with different views can work together. And generally it works pretty well. It's such a good system that it's been adopted by the World Council of Churches and other church groups.



Which brings us to the history of David, who had been anointed by Samuel to be the next king of Israel when in his youth. But the problem for David was that Israel already had a king – Saul – also anointed by Samuel and David refused to overthrow or kill Saul, although he had several opportunities

to do so.

Instead David **waited** ... a long time as it turned out ... until after King Saul and his son Jonathan were killed in battle. Even then, it was only the tribe of Judah, David's tribe, which recognised him as being the new king. So David waited some more until **all** the tribes came to him and acknowledged that God had indeed chosen him to be king. That was the **mandate** – the **consensus decision** – that David was waiting for and in today's reading he is anointed as king over all Israel at the age of 30.

All of which suggests that **we shouldn't rush in too quickly to make people leaders**. A person's character and gifts are really important – as we've reflected on already in this series on leadership - but there is also the matter of **experience** – and the **practical wisdom** that comes from having to deal with life with its disappointments, setbacks and difficulties.

So will Baranaby Joyce be a **better** leader second time round? Will his recent life experiences make him more empathetic or will it entrench his views on the place of women, for instance? I guess time will tell.

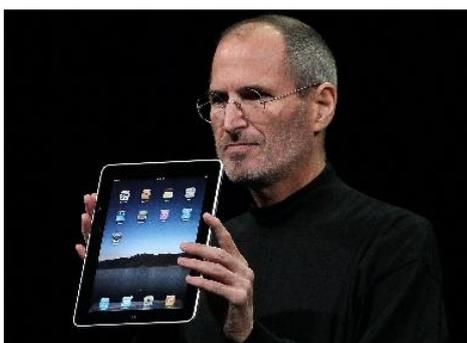
It's interesting to note that **Jesus** – like King David - didn't start **his** public ministry until the age of 30. We're told very little about Jesus' life up until that point, but presumably he was gaining wisdom and experience in life.



Another responsibility we ask of leaders is to provide a **vision** ... a clear idea of how the future might look.

Visionary leaders are often charismatic and persuasive and help other people see a different view of the future and a plan for how to get there.

Visionary leaders can of course be **good** or **evil** – think of **Hitler**, for instance, and his vision of the **Third Reich** dominating the entire world –



or **Steve Jobs** and his vision for **Apple** to develop the best hardware and software for computers to make the world a better place. Personally, I think that this vision for Apple is a bit vague and a bit too commercial but it's enabled the building of a hugely successful business enterprise.

Previously in this series I've said that being a leader is hard – and that it's much easier to

criticise leaders than to actually lead. But when I think of our current leaders in the Federal government I'm appalled by their **lack of vision**. There seems to be no plan for actually addressing climate change, for instance, and no plan for dealing with the 30,000 or more refugees and asylum seekers currently living in Australia. Likewise there doesn't seem to be any plan for the country beyond further tax cuts for the wealthy. There just doesn't seem to be any vision other than to muddle through to the end of the pandemic.



Which brings us again to **David** and his vision. David was a renowned soldier, skilled at guerilla warfare, and over a 10 to 15 year period managed to win battles against many of Israel's neighbours, which brought peace to the country. One of the last places that David conquered was the city of Jerusalem, and given its natural defences, with steep valleys on three sides, David decided to make it his stronghold.

David wanted more than just a place to build a secure fortress. He also wanted to build a permanent place of worship **for God**, a **temple** to house the Ark of the Covenant, a visible sign of God's presence. David's vision, then, was to build a central city where all the people of Israel could come to worship their God. This was a bigger vision than building a city or even a city with a major temple ... it was a vision to unite **all** the tribes of Israel together, focused on a place to worship God.



But it seems that God had a slightly **different** vision for the future, as communicated to David through the prophet Nathan.

Yes, God would grant David **peace** from his enemies.

Yes, Jerusalem would be the place to build a temple, but David's son, Solomon, would be the one to build that temple.

But rather than David **building a house for God**, **God would build a house for David**, a promise of enduring kingship to David's offspring ... no less than an eternal kingdom ruled over by a dynasty stemming from David. History shows that Jerusalem did indeed become the capital of Israel. It became known as the city of David.

His son, Solomon, did indeed build a magnificent temple that became the centre of Israel's worship and one of the wonders of the ancient world.



And ... God did establish the house of David, a line of kings that ruled Israel for nearly 400 years until the Babylonians attacked and destroyed Jerusalem and took all the leaders of Israel into exile in Babylon.

So what are we to make of this vision and the succession of leaders who sustained this so-called 'golden age' of Israel?

To begin, the vision was life-affirming and transformative, with David's best hopes enlarged by God's bigger vision. But within two generations there was discord and division that split Israel into two distinct groups – Judah in the south and Israel in the north. Thereafter it was all downhill until the Babylonians eventually brought the vision to an end – or so it seemed.



People still clung stubbornly to the vision ... but began to **re-imagine** it.

God would surely raise up **another David**, another king to unite Israel and defeat her enemies. This hope eventually became the hope for a **Messiah**.

At the time of Jesus, the people wondered if **he** might be this Messiah, especially as he talked so much about a **kingdom**.

But just as **God** transformed David's vision for an eternal house, so too **Jesus** transformed the vision of an eternal kingdom. Instead of a place ruled over by a king with a physical temple, Jesus' vision of **God's** kingdom was a realm in people's **hearts** where God's ways would reign – where love and justice and forgiveness and inclusion would be the foundation.

This vision for God's kingdom appeared to end with the death of Jesus, but his resurrection and ascension to be with God suggested a new way to understand the **vision of an eternal kingdom** ... and as we heard in the opening verses of Paul's letter to the Romans, Jesus was descended from the line of David but was then declared to be David's greater son, no less than the **Son of God**, by his resurrection from the dead.

So a vision that started with David, grows and is transformed over the centuries to become Jesus' vision for a new kingdom, not based in the temple in Jerusalem but based in people's hearts.

Part of leadership, then, is to provide a **compelling vision for the future**, and then to be humble and flexible enough to accept input from others – including from God's Spirit - that will often change and transform the vision. Leadership is then about assisting others to implement the vision.



The development of this Croydon North site is an example of such a vision coming to pass ... a small church with a declining congregation was presented with an idea of transforming the site to social housing with a community centre – this space – placed in the middle. It took quite a few years for this vision to become reality – and it took a fair amount of faith and trust – but it is a vision that has sustained this community and which may well outlive it. And now this site provides somewhere to live for people who would struggle to find a place in the commercial rental market as well as a place to serve the community each Tuesday and a place for worship.

The Croydon congregation too has a vision, although it has been stalled a little by Covid. The vision is to redevelop the church into a flexible, multi-purpose building that can serve the community. In order to finance the final stages of the development, the land that the Hall sits on and its surrounds will be subdivided and sold for housing. So it's a vision somewhat akin to Croydon North, but not yet fully realized.

In both cases, however, the vision of earlier leadership was to build connections with the wider community and to offer a safe and inviting space where God's kingdom can take root in people's hearts and grow, a vision that reflects Jesus' vision of the kingdom that in turn grew out of David's vision to build a home for God.

We'll now sing about how that vision is built ... [Let us build a house](#)