Have you ever been to a football match or some other sports event? I used to be chaplain to the mighty Dagenham and Redbridge FC, bastions of League three. As chaplain I was invited into the mighty directors box (and it was the size of a box) and treated to the finest cuisine every time I went (always the same Heinz tomato soup at half time and shepherd’s pie after the game)! Being a small club, you sat very close to the pitch and experienced the lovely sweat of the players hitting you in the face!

Someone once defined football as:

“A football game is 50,000 people who are badly in need of exercise sitting

up in the stands cheering for 22 men who are badly in need of rest.”

That’s exactly how Moses felt. In need of a rest! Our reading recounts the people of Israel in the wilderness. They have escaped the terrors of Egypt and slavery and subjection but now reality is setting in. The Bible describes the people of Israel as a moaning rabble. I love that word because it’s very honest! It’s what they were!

**4**The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, ‘If only we had meat to eat! **5**We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost – also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. **6**But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!’

Moan, moan, wail, wail.

Moses has had enough.

**10**Moses heard the people of every family wailing at the entrance to their tents. **11**He asked the Lord, ‘Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? …’

These people were like babies, like infants having to be carried along in the arms of a parent and wailing, “Give us meat to eat!”.

Moses is at rock bottom and says he’d rather die. He is the only one doing anything!

So what is the answer? Order a big takeaway? Meat feast pizza for half a million? Often we want God to magic up an answer, do a miracle, especially if it doesn’t involve any effort from us.

But this wasn’t God’s way this time. He had a different idea.

It was time for them to grow up! It was time for them to share the load. It was time for them to become responsible.

God says:

**16**The Lord said to Moses: ‘Bring me seventy of Israel’s elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Make them come to the tent of meeting’

Moses is probably thinking this is to strike these moaners down with a dose of holy fire. But not at all. It’s the opposite. It is to place onto them something that Moses already had.

The Spirit. What does the Spirit bring in this case?

It is leadership, power and responsibility. The Greek word is charisma – *“a divinely conferred power or talent”*. But more than just a gift – gift to serve and to take on the burden of Moses.

They were to share in the charisma of Moses. They were to be mini-Moses.

Why? To share the load and to help all the people to mature and truly use their gifts.

And what was the sign of their gift going to be? Prophecy.

A prophet is simply one who brings a message from God. It could be about the future, or about the present, it could be something big or something small, it could be something “critical” – especially of injustice – or something encouraging. The common factor is that it divine inspired and brought about in an atmosphere of prayer.

It doesn’t happen to me all the time, but occasionally I get something unmistakeable. I was in a meeting at Sanderstead and we were put in groups of four and asked to pray for a prophetic word for each other. I was praying for a lady called Penny, and I had a very strong image in my mind of a seashore where all the sand had be washed away in the winter storms. When I told her, she looked at me shocked and said that’s amazing. It turns out that she used to live in Wales where one winter all the sand got washed away from the beach. She asked the local and they said don’t worry it will come back. It turned out that Penny was facing a major op, and was wondering what would happen in her life. My word for her was an amazing reassurance for her.

Later on this morning we all have a chance to be prophetic in our Mission Action Planning. We want to sketch out the future – a vision of where the church is going in the next 3 to 5 years. So we all have a chance to be “prophetic” in one sense, but to do so through prayer, and humility. Will you stay and take part? What will God say through you? I firmly believe in the ministry of the many, not the few.

You might say, well it’s not for me – I’m not charismatic, I’m not part of the select few, I’d never get chosen.

Did you note the rest of the story? The tent of meeting was the holy place and that’s where the 70 elders had gathered with Moses, and that’s where they had received the Spirit, and that’s where they had prophesised. As well as these 70, there were two others - Eldad and Medad who had remained in the camp with everyone else. Perhaps they were too shy to go or felt too unworthy. We don’t know. What we do know is that the chosen seventy had already run out of steam. They had stopped prophesying. They seem to be something of a disappointment.

So, instead the Spirit came onto the two extras, Eldad and Medad and they started prophesying right there in the middle of the camp. Some were concerned. Joshua said to Moses that they should be stopped!

**29**But Moses replied, ‘Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!’

I wish that all the Lord’s people were prophets!

God is gracious and merciful and even when we think we are unworthy and not up to it, his gifts are available for all, not just the few – perhaps even more so when you think you don’t deserve it!

In fact Eldad and Medad weren’t in the special, exclusive place set apart for the great and the good but *in the camp.*  In Bible language that means incarnation, amongst the ordinary people, in the thick of it – where Jesus would go to be one of us and save us.

And that is where we are called to go too. To be *in the camp*  - to be out there among the ordinary people, the unworthy, the agnostic, the unloved, the indifferent. That is what we called to do, that is what we are anointed to do, that is what we are filled with the Holy Spirit to do. Are you up for it too?