LIFE IN THE BUBBLE

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When we live in a bubble we become focussed on our own needs and experiences and lose sight of the wider world.
Category: Christian Life

If you live in the UK, you can't fail to have noticed that there is a bit of a furore about pay at the BBC. In fact, yesterday, the majority of BBC news bulletins led on the story about the gender pay gap at the corporation. At one point the BBC essentially reported that the BBC had asked to speak to the BBC, but the the BBC had refused to speak to them.

Let's be clear; the salary you are paid should be independent of your gender. If men and women are doing the same job, they should be paid at the same rate. The BBC have a problem and they need to fix it. Equally, as the major funding source for the BBC is the general public, through the licence fee, this is a story of genuine public interest. However, it is not, by any stretch of the imagination the most important thing happening in the UK at the moment. In fact, it could be argued that it isn't even the most important thing happening at the BBC. It does not deserve the blanket coverage that the corporation has given it.

Then again, look at this from the point of view of the people working in BBC news. Since the salaries of top staff were announced last year, this has undoubtedly been a major talking point. You can imagine them at coffee breaks and over lunch chatting about the gender pay gap and the enormous salaries paid to some people for reading an autocue. This is a big deal to them and because of this, it makes its way into the news bulletins. It is perfectly understandable that they would report on the thing that is dominating their lives. As a consequence, the BBC has stopped reporting the news and has become the news. We have a problem.

However, I don't want to get tied up in commentating on the media, there is enough of this going around at the moment. There are, however, a couple of implications of all of this for the church.

Firstly, when the church becomes the story, we have made a mistake. The BBC's job is to report on the news, not to talk about the BBC and the church's job is to point people to Jesus, not to talk about itself.

Secondly, it is all too easy for people in church to get absorbed by the life of the church and become unaware of insensitive to things beyond their own experience. The church can and should meet (some of) the needs of its members, but that is not its primary focus. First and foremost, the church exists for God. He calls it into being and he sends it out in mission and he is the object of our worship and praise. It is far too easy for our own concerns about the style of music, the order of service, the preacher's dress sense (or lack of it) and 1,001 other things to get in the way of this focus on God and his purposes for the church. We can make discussion of these things sound oh-so-spiritual, but all to often they are about us and our comfort, however holy they sound.

Similarly, church can be so focussed on the experience of the Christians who attend that it becomes a strange, or even hostile place for unbelievers. Why would people come along to our services if we speak in a strange jargon and go out of our way to make them feel uncomfortable? Yes, the gospel is an offence, but do people stick around long enough to understand gospel or are they just put off by our weirdness?

BBC news staff live in a bubble in which their pay and conditions are the most important news story of the day. Christians can also live in a bubble which makes them insensitive to all but their own needs too.