"The Kingdom of Heaven" movie stars Orlando Bloom as Balian, a blacksmith-turned-knight who is left with the dubious honour of defending Jerusalem in the Crusades. (See the 'Rise a Knight' scene, accessible at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXWSod_G9Tc&feature=fvrs: 2.35-3.40.) Most other knights and much of the army had been killed in a military disaster out in the desert. Jerusalem becomes surrounded by the army of the Muslim Sultan Saladin. It is the year 1187. Balian is in Jerusalem and faces overwhelming odds against Saladin outside the walls, and intrigue, doubt and scepticism from within. He devises a number of innovative defensive measures and rouses the population. Everyone does what they can and they get ready for action.

However, a priest questions how he can even consider trying to defend the city without knights. In response, Balian turns to his page and knights the common young lad. Then he invites all men-at-arms and other willing soldiers within hearing distance to kneel and be knighted:

- Be without fear in the face of your enemies
- Be brave and upright that God may love thee
- Speak the truth, even if it lead to your death
- Safeguard the helpless
- That is your oath
- And that [sigh] is so you remember it
- Rise a knight

The priest questions him again, "Who do you think you are? Will you alter the world? Does making a man a knight make them a better fighter?" The priest is right in that the title makes little difference. But the courage and belief in his fellow-soldiers that Balian shows brings out their best. The Crusades are a sad blight on church history and whether the real historical Balian was as egalitarian and upright as Hollywood depicts is debatable and highly questionable. But it is an inspiring movie of standing in the gap and empowering ordinary people for extraordinary feats. Balian's greatest leadership is to stand in the gap and arouse courageous leadership in others.

We need to hear and learn from more stories of courageous leadership that advances the Kingdom of God, not in a dominating crusade-like stance but as Jesus intended. I wonder what is the best experience of courageous and empowering leadership you have experienced?

Darren Cronshaw pastors AuburnLife and is BU's researcher in our Mission Catalyst Team. He invites your response in the blog below.