

## Reflection for Sunday 14th June (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Trinity)

### Gospel reading for the day:

*Matthew 9.35-10.8*

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.

"Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

"Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes."

### Reflection.

Matthew tells us 'When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd'. It wasn't just one crowd in one place that touched Jesus' heart. He was travelling around all the towns and villages in the area. There were

people living under the oppression of Roman rule. There were fishermen, operating seasonally, wondering if they would make ends meet. It was a class society where some appeared to have everything and others, afflicted by disease or disability, were despised and destined to a life of poverty.

What does Jesus do for the people whose situation brought out that compassionate reaction? He gathers his disciples together and sends them out. Can you imagine how that felt? It must have been great fun following Jesus around and watching him do miracles and give amazing teaching. Now suddenly they are sent out on their own. If you've ever felt completely out of your depth in some situation, you have an idea what it might have been like for the disciples.

Yet Mark and Luke both tell us that the disciples went around preaching the good news and healing many people. Later, when Jesus sent out seventy, they returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' (Luke 10:17). There's a sense that they were surprised by what God had been able to do through them.

Today our news is filled with people demonstrating around the world against injustice and prejudice, questions about the wisdom and integrity of the world's leaders, people struggling financially as a result of the pandemic and thousands trying to come to terms with the premature death of a loved one. If Jesus were walking around the villages, towns and cities of this or any other country today, he would surely be filled with the same compassion that Matthew tells us about. Today, just like two thousand years ago, the world is filled with people who are harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Who will Jesus send to them?

You of course!

If that makes you feel out of your depth, you are not alone. But God is always ready to bless even the smallest and most tentative steps that we take to share his love with those around us. As St Paul discovered, God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9). We don't have to share the good news with great words. The simple practical bits of kindness can often speak much more loudly. Sometimes just being there to listen without judgement or advice, can enable the Holy Spirit to speak. The only question is whether you are willing to be sent.

There is a Celtic blessing from the Northumbria Community ([www.northumbriacommunity.org](http://www.northumbriacommunity.org)) that I really like.

*May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,  
wherever He may send you.  
May He guide you through the wilderness,  
protect you through the storm.  
May He bring you home rejoicing  
at the wonders He has shown you.*

The first disciples came home rejoicing at the wonders God had shown them. May it be the same for you, his disciples today.

Jonathan.