

MATTHEW 9:27-38
PROCLAIMING...

Your grandson asks you a question about Jesus because he's been learning about Christianity at school; you think for a moment and answer his question as best you can. Proclaiming Jesus. Your neighbour leans across the fence when you're in the garden and asks you about the banner that she's seen outside the church advertising the latest event; "what's that all about?" and you answer her. Proclaiming Jesus. You're standing at the water cooler in the office, or the photocopier, and someone you work with comes along and begins to tell you about the difficult things happening in their life and asks you what you think they should do; you consider, then share something of your experience of life and faith. Proclaiming Jesus. The preacher takes a Bible story and explains it, helping us understand Jesus and the gospel and faith and how to live. Proclaiming Jesus.

The gospel is good news; the gospel is entrusted to us by Jesus, to His Church; we have it for safe keeping, as treasure to be looked after; we have it for sharing, telling others; we need to do both. We are stewards, looking after the gospel to make sure that message is still the same; we are heralds, proclaiming the good news. Proclaiming is done in all kinds of ways, as I've tried to illustrate. We proclaim when we answer questions; we proclaim when we tell something of Jesus to a neighbour or a friend; we proclaim in sermons. Proclaiming is telling people what we know and what we believe, quietly and humbly. Jesus looked at His world and saw people who "*were harassed...*" (*Matthew 9:36*), people lacking care and guidance, not knowing where to turn in times of need or for answers to their questions. Our world is exactly the same: "*the harvest...*" (*Matthew 9:37*) We are called to be these workers in the harvest by proclaiming Jesus.

Jesus proclaimed: "*Jesus went...*" (*Matthew 9:35*) A huge part of His ministry was to proclaim good news to people. This tends to get lost in amongst the other parts of His ministry; He is famous for healings and miracles, for spectacular things, but Jesus came to preach and to proclaim and He travelled around telling people the good news that God is King! He had compassion for people in need: He saw people in need of grace and He saw a religious leadership incapable of giving that kind of lead to their people; the religion they brought bewildered people, weighed them down with burdens and so they "*were harassed...*" (*9:36*) Jesus taught them that God is King and that when God is King, their lives are filled with grace. The Church has always had a message to proclaim, ever since then, and it is the same message, that Jesus is Lord and that when Jesus is Lord, grace fills our lives.

Two blind men are healed. Jesus tests the sincerity of their faith; they believe that Jesus has the power to heal and Jesus heals. But then Jesus says "*See that...*" (*Matthew 9:30*) "Don't tell anyone!" "*But they...*" (*9:31*) In their exuberance, they probably can't help but tell others what Jesus had done and so they go about telling everyone they meet that Jesus has just healed them; they were blind, but now they see! They proclaim Jesus' compassion and power to anyone who will listen. We're never really sure why Jesus told them to keep quiet; perhaps He was afraid of the danger that He would be misunderstood and that people would take Him wrong way. But almost every time He said it, the people ignored Him and told others anyway. Jesus is proclaimed by two blind men telling the story of their faith.

The crying need of our world is for Jesus to be proclaimed. *“When He...” (9:36f)* The sheep are unprotected and leaderless; there is no-one to look after them or lead them to find food. It is picture of people who are lost, not knowing where to turn for answers to the big questions of life and faith. Our world is like that; people are asking big questions, but they just don't know where to find answers; the bookshops full of lifestyle books, in the 'body, mind, spirit' section and there are all kinds of views. People are bewildered and unsure, struggling at times, looking for guidance and wisdom. The gospel is all of these things, bringing peace, wisdom, guidance, and forgiveness to people and our job is to tell them, to point people to Jesus, so that in Him people in our community might find grace and peace.

Proclaiming Jesus – how? There are three ways:

We tell people – most obviously we use words; we tell people what Jesus is like, what Jesus has done, and we share our own story of faith and grace; perhaps the thing that makes us most anxious is the thought of talking to someone about precious things; try it out; practice it; take a risk; don't be afraid to fail; if you're sincere, your friend will know that!

We show people – what do people see? They need to see Jesus in us as well as hear Jesus from us. “God has brought the light; we are to do the shining.” (Wright) We do that by the kind of people we are, by the way that we live, by the good that we do.

The communion service – *“we proclaim...” (1 Corinthians 11:26)* The familiar words of the service proclaim what Jesus did; we proclaim, by being here, that we believe these things, declaring our faith in Jesus and in His death for us and our sin.

Proclaiming Jesus – take a risk; be the harvest worker; be a blessing to others.