

Sunday Update
14th June 2020

Matthew 9:35-10:8

35 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. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'

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

2 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; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, preach this message: "The kingdom of heaven is near." 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

"Mission" is a word that we use in Church. It is a "church word" even if other people have taken it and used it. We talk about summer missions, when teams of people have set up on the beach to try to tell children and their parents about Jesus. We have a mission statement: "building Christ's Church in the community". The Church has missionaries: people who are sent to other places to tell people about Jesus, mainly overseas places. You won't find the church discussing mission much in the past as something we do in Scotland, because we understood that Scotland was Christian and the Church didn't need mission in our communities because "everybody knew and everybody believed!"

It has been interesting, during these last few weeks, to reflect on the gospel passages that we've been reading together. These passages show us something of Jesus and His mission, but also the mission on which He sent His disciples. I have been trying to think aloud about what mission looks like for us at the moment and what mission will look like for the church in "the new normal" that is supposed to be coming our way. The verses above show us Jesus looking at the people around Him and reacting to what He sees and then challenging His disciples by sending them out on a little mission project, a training exercise for the days to come. Michael Green was a Anglican minister who was an advisor to a previous Archbishop of Canterbury on the subject of evangelism; he has written a book on Matthew's gospel and I'm going to use the five words he used to sum up this Bible passage.

The first word is "see". What do you see when you look around you just now? I don't really mean the view from your window, but what do you see in society? What is happening around about us? What are people like? Jesus saw the people around Him and described them as "*harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd*". They were lost; literally "torn and thrown down"; life was hard and they didn't know where to turn for help; Jesus saw people who felt hopeless. At the same time, He saw leaders who were offering nothing by way of leadership and the people were stuck. What do we see in our Covid-19 world? What do we see in ourselves? What do we see in other people? What do we see in society? What do we see of faith and the church? The big impression I have is not much different from Jesus' impression of His day, seeing people who are certainly harassed and while they may not describe themselves as helpless, they are lost, wondering where to turn for hope and help.

Next, we “care”. Well, do we? Jesus has “*compassion on them*”. This was his “gut reaction” to what He saw. He was moved by what He saw; He felt for the people He saw and felt with them in their plight. He cared. The message of the last twelve weeks has been to care, for ourselves and for others and for the NHS, and it has worked; we have discovered that we are not individual islands, but we are connected and that sense of connectedness has led us to care for others, perhaps more than we did before. Do we care for the people we know, that they find hope and help?

The third word is “pray”. “*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest...*” Jesus prays and asks God to do something about this lost people. His prayer is for God to have people ready to help those in need, ready to share good news with them, ready to point them in the right direction. He prays. Prayer is a gift that we’ve spoken about a good deal in the last few weeks; it is part of our sense of dependence on God that we learn to pray. Google searches for “prayer” have been far higher than normal in these last few weeks and 15 copies of the *Try Praying* booklet have been taken from outside our building. Pray about what you see! Pray for people about whom you care. Pray for God to do something about our predicament and the needs of the people we know. We also have to be prepared to be part of the answer to our own prayers.

“Go”! Matthew lists the twelve disciples and then tells us that Jesus has a mission-task for them. They are to go, perhaps in pairs or perhaps as a group, to the towns and villages of Israel, and as they go, they are to tell people the good news and act out that good news by helping people in need. They are to do exactly the kinds of things that Jesus had already been doing. They are to depend on the hospitality of the people they meet, going in the power and in the name of Jesus, doing what they do because Jesus sent them. Mission is all about this sense of being “sent”. For us, “going” is about looking out beyond the walls of the church to the people around us, to the community, to see what people need and to ask how we can help them.

Michael Green’s last word is “receive”. This mission-task was to train them for the days to come; they were to receive training and learn lessons. They had already received grace from Jesus, with the good news of the kingdom, and the sense that Jesus loved them and that they mattered. Later, they would receive the gift of the Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, as we saw two weeks ago. They were to receive all of this, but it wasn’t for keeping! “*Freely you have received, freely give*” – it was for giving away; it was for sharing. The good grace that they had received from God was to be their motive for mission; they had something good and worth-while to share.

What do we see in the world around us today? Do we care for anyone other than ourselves? Will we learn to pray, asking God to do something about what we see? When He says to us “you go” will we say “Yes, Lord, send me”? Do we value the grace that God has given us, enough to want to share that same grace with others?

Prayer: thank You for the good gifts You have given to us, for your love for us, for the grace with which you have blessed us, for the gift of Jesus and all that we have in Him. Help us to see what is around us; give us compassion; teach us to pray; let us be ready to serve; fill us with Your Spirit and strength. May we bring light and hope, love and strength to people in need today.

*Day by day, dear Lord of you
Three things I pray:
To see you more clearly,
To love you more dearly,
To follow you more nearly,
Day by day.*

Pray for:

- The mission of the Church: our local church, churches across Scotland, churches across the world, to be outward-looking churches, concerned for people we meet outside the building, concerned for the needs of our communities.
- People who are weak and vulnerable today, those who mourn, those who are sick, those who are isolated and lonely; those in hospital and families who can't visit; pray for people you know by name.
- NHS staff, care home staff, those caring in the community – God keep them safe.
- The opening up of lockdown, to be done carefully and not recklessly.
- For the virus to go away completely; pray that science will find a vaccine.
- People whose hearts and minds are feeling “shut-in”, for whom the physical lockdown is affecting their mental health and sense of well-being and freedom. For victims of domestic violence, with nowhere to escape to.
- Children and young people at home, missing friends from school, missing the contact with other people. Parents working, schooling children, trying to care for other family members.
- Those who are furloughed from work and those who have lost their jobs and have no prospect of a new job soon pray for a sense of purpose when they are away from paid employment.
- Our community, caring for vulnerable people, helping those in need, for resilience and strength.
- Our political leaders, trying to make difficult decisions in the right way.
- Other parts of the world, suffering as we are, in the same situation and with the same needs. The people of the USA, trying to come to terms with issues of racism; the people of Bangladesh and the Rohingya refugees wrestling with the aftermath of last week's superstorm.
- For one another, sustaining our faith when there is nothing of the outward life of the church. For Martin Fair, the new Moderator of the General Assembly as he finds his feet in this new role in leadership of the Church.

Here are some links to hymns you might know and love; go and have a listen.

My heart is filled with thankfulness https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qntf2Y_VNok
Great is thy faithfulness <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0k1WhFtVp0o>
From heaven you came <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VeQrWmvCms>
Better is one day with Jesus <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9b121zg3ao>
Will your anchor hold <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTfypuXwrMA>

Heather's A-Z of videos: the latest is L <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RYolvpoZBY>

Favourite Bible passage:

Do you have a favourite Bible passage? Why not tell us what it is. Here's what to do: pick your favourite Bible passage, then video yourself reading it and in a sentence explain why you picked it. E-mail the video to me and we'll collect them on the Youtube channel or the church website. Give it a go! You can see the latest of these at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtAet-tORqo&t=1s>

Some other resources:

- Each Sunday at 10.30am, we will have a short time together using Zoom; a link has been sent out in the e-mail with this update which should enable you to join in.
- This reflection is available on our own church website under the “sermons” tab and there is an archive of sermon material there for you to read and links to the video reflections – www.jgpc.org.uk
- If you have a smartphone, the Bible2020 app will give you a short bible reading each day (from the Scottish Bible Society)

- Scripture Union daily bible readings can be found at <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive>
- The Church of Scotland website has prayers and reflections from the Moderator and details of lots of on-line streamed church services - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>
- Claremont Church in East Kilbride are making services available over a phone line: here are the contact details which you can share with people who are not on line: **Sunday Services @ 10:30 - same details every week** 020 3937 2973; PIN: 352 598 857#
- There will be a service on BBC1 at some time on Sunday morning.

Call to action

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Pray

Lord Jesus,
you call us to follow
in your footsteps,
to live a life of love;
by serving our neighbours,
by being kind,
by being generous,
by welcoming people,
by forgiving those who hurt us.

You did this

when you lived on the earth,
you have shown us
by your example and
now you ask us
to do the same.

It is hard Lord,
but we promise to try.

Help us Lord Jesus
to be more like you.

Amen.



Question...



Where is your favourite place to go? Why do you like it there? What would you need to take if you were going to stay there for a week?

Play together...

Play a game of bring me. Either in teams or individually, bring a certain number of a particular item eg 3 socks, 1 teddy bear, 4 left shoes. Finish with 12 of something such as 12 pencils/lego bricks/blades of grass! Hold onto these as you can use them to tell the story.

Read the Bible...



- Read Matthew 9:35 – 10:10.
- Use the 12 items you collected as each of the 12 disciples, hold each one up as you name them.
- You could mime or act out the story as it's read. What actions could you use for all Jesus and the disciples did?

Talk together...



- What was Jesus sending his disciples out to do?
- Why did Jesus want them to help?
- What were they to take with them/not take with them?
- How do you think the disciples felt about the mission Jesus was giving them?
- Have you ever had to do something that was very hard or tested you?
- What do you think spreading the Good News about Jesus looks like today?
- How do we get involved?

Think together...



Jesus knew that there were so many people who needed to hear about God. So he called the 12 disciples to be his helpers and to take the message to the Israelites, to those who had forgotten about God.

The miracles the disciples would do would remind people of God's power and that he was the one they should worship and praise.

Jesus calls each of us to be his disciples too – to learn from him and to share the Good News to those around us. He gives us the Holy Spirit to help us and be with us. How does that make you feel? What sort of things could you do to tell or show people God's love?

Do something...

Think of something you can do to share the love of God with someone this week. Here's a few ideas if you're stuck:

- Make a card and send it to a friend or family member.
- Phone someone for a chat.
- Tell someone your favourite Bible story and why. What does it show you about God?
- Bake for your neighbours.
- Do a job around the house without being asked.
- Pick a friend/family member/someone you know and pray for them every day this week.
- Spend time with someone doing something they enjoy.

Praise together...



The song from last week fits well with today's story too, or you could listen and join in with this one:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwlxrVLQgxA>

Pray together...

Sometimes we can't go anywhere, do anything, say something or show anyone God's love, but we can always pray. Pray for situations and people you know who need to hear and experience God's love and peace right now. God listens and he hears and he can give what is needed.

