

## Thoughts on the First Sunday after Trinity 2020

Today's Gospel: Matthew ch 9 vv 35 – ch 10 v23



Today's Gospel is a very long one! You can read less up to chapter 10 verse 8, but then you will get only part. And since many of you are still at home with time to spare, you should be able to fit in those extra verses!

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of the story.  
spare, you

The story begins with Jesus doing the rounds of towns and villages where he taught the people about God's coming Kingdom, and healed the physically sick, and mentally ill. But he was doing all this on his own. True, those faithful followers his disciples were with him, but it seems that Jesus was doing most, if not all of the work.

He does not think to himself, Why am I carrying this burden on my own? What he sees, is not one very tired teacher and healer, but a huge number of people milling around in a kind of hopeless and helpless daze. Or as Jesus puts it, *sheep without a shepherd*. So he turns to his disciples. Look at this, he says, *The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few, therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest*. And without more ado, he prepares his disciples for their life's task - taking the Good News to all people, and he prepares them by giving them power to heal just like his own. Sending the labourers out into the harvest.

But before they go, Jesus gives them instructions as to where to go and how to behave. As far as where they are to go, this might surprise us. *Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news. The kingdom of heaven has come near*. Why only Israel? At this point in Jesus's ministry, he may still have been hoping that Israel, God's chosen people, would come to understand the message Jesus was bringing to them. After all, he told the Samaritan woman whose daughter he healed, that he was sent first to the people of Israel.

And then, he continues with other instructions which again, might sound strange to our ears. He sends them out unprepared for a journey, no money, no bag, no spare clothes or sandals must be taken. He tells them that good workers are worthy of their pay, in this case, food and a bed for the night. And Jesus tells them to leave places where they are not welcome, and to stay in one place where they are accepted. This was a bit of common sense advice, for if they remained in one place for a few days, people would know where to find them if they wanted to listen, or if they came for healing. But as Jesus's advice continues, it changes. And with hindsight, we can see that he was now speaking of their lives after he had returned to his Father. From verse 16 onwards: *See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves...*we note that the life of a disciple is not going to be easy or even particularly pleasant.

There is a reassurance of sorts, for them. *But the one who endures to the end will be saved*. But it does not seem much in the light of the trials and tribulations Jesus has told them to expect. Yet it remained with them as they eventually met their deaths in

various ways, both natural and brought about by others. They had kept their faith to the end, and that is what we must do too.

It reminds me of this time of trial and tribulation we are locked into at the moment. Not to our liking, and for the most part, not of our making, yet here we are, imprisoned by advice that is almost legal in its intent, and which we contravene at our peril, and indeed the peril of others too. Advice which often changes on a daily basis which makes it difficult to keep up, and even now some strategies have been put in place to allow those of us living alone to reconnect with family members, my first reaction is fear after being alone in my home for 12 weeks. Fear that it is too soon to start to mix more closely even with my beloved daughter, fear that just when we have fixed a date for her to visit, things might change again, and we will have to call it off.

When that happens, I can recall those words of Jesus to his disciples: *But the one who endures to the end will be saved.* And the disciples would have been in a far worse state than me! They were threatened with death. I am not threatened with anything worse than staying in my home for a bit longer. As I write this, this morning on the radio, they were speaking to homeless people who have been given temporary refuge in hotels during the pandemic. The hotel contract runs out soon, and those homeless people will once again find themselves on the streets. There are many people “out there” who need our prayers today. We may not be able to do much while we are confined to barracks, but we can all pray. And we are assured that God will hear and answer our prayers.

When we speak to someone about our faith today, we are not going to be taken prisoner for doing so, or be submitted to any of the other dreadful atrocities that the Romans thought up for the early Christians. The most that can happen is for someone to say they are not interested. So we add them to our prayer list and move on to wherever the Holy Spirit takes us. And we remember that Jesus told his disciples, and therefore is also telling us: *But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

The Lord bless you and keep you,  
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace,  
Amen

**Rev Linda**