

Service for Sunday 14 June

Revd Pauline Crispin

Loving Lord, your grace draws us to your presence; your peace unites us in your love; your hope inspires us to praise your glory. May our worship be worthy of you. Amen.

Matthew 9:35-10:8 ³⁵ Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for 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 laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

10 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as 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 Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'

⁸ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

Sing or Read:

- 1 God forgave my sin in Jesus' name ;
I've been born again in Jesus' name,
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his love as he told me to.
He said :
'Freely, freely you have received,
freely, freely give ;
go in my name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'

- 2 All power is given in Jesus' name
in earth and heaven in Jesus' name ;
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his power as he told me to.
Refrain

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Lord, it's difficult to live with uncertainty.

However bad a situation, knowing what you have to face means that you can start coming to terms with it, facing your fears, planning your strategy.

**When the 'big picture' is too big or too blurred and indistinct,
it's easier to focus on small details, to try to control what you can.**

Lord, the world has changed how does that affect our living in the meantime?

How do I need to change? How do I want to change?

**Is it possible to live each day as a new opportunity,
while knowing that it feels the same as yesterday?**

**We need your help, God, to listen for you in the clamour of voices calling for my attention,
to focus on you in the midst of competing priorities, to trust you in this time of
uncertainty. Amen.**

Thought for this week:

A tourist collected a few of the signs in English which are meant to help the Brits traveling abroad.

In an airline ticket office in Copenhagen, there is this promise: "We take your bags and send them in all directions."

A Swiss restaurant announces to its customers that "Our wines leave you with nothing to hope for."

An Acapulco hotel posts a sign assuring its customers that "The manager has personally passed all the water served here."

In Paris, one of the city's hotels invites its visitors to "Please leave your values at the front desk"

Our problem is not that we have lost all our values. Our problem is that they have become too small. We can put our values away in an overnight bag and bring them out when we need to show them off.

"Many years ago I had to take a funeral service for a lady who was a church member. I hadn't been at that particular church very long and therefore I didn't know her very well. I had only known her as a lady with severe Alzheimer's. When I began to prepare the address for the service I recognised that I didn't know much about her. All I knew was of her total dependence on others to care for her. All she had ever said when I visited was "I love you," and all I had ever seen her do was smile.

At her funeral I shared my experience of her. I went on to say, a young tree sapling starts with a core and adds layers as it matures. Each ring marking a year and adding another layer. As in life each experience and thought is added to our core, a rings on a tree. When I met this lady all of her layers had gone and only her core was left. Her core was love. When all is stripped away, 'What is your core made of? What is the core of the church?'

I would suggest to you that our text for today contains the clues to our core values.

Matthew 9:35-38 says: "Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Good News of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest indeed is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Pray therefore that the Lord of the harvest will send out labourers into his harvest.'"

The gospel account moves from one phase of Jesus' ministry into the next. For the past two chapters, the writer has been sharing stories of healings and miracles one after another in order to show to the readers that Jesus is the Messiah.

Verses 35-38 serve, then, a transitional purpose. They offer a final summing up of Jesus' healing ministry while opening up a new line of thought, the mission and message that must continue to be spread throughout the land. Verse 35 nicely summarizes the activities which

had defined Jesus' own mission up to this point, healing, teaching and preaching. I hope we are equally known for healing. We may not have experienced as many spectacular miracles as they did when Jesus walked the earth, but we have shown the compassion spoken of in the next line. Jesus saw the crowds and had compassion on them.

Every church has a choice of whether to be inclusive or exclusive. We can become a sanctuary for saints where purity reigns, or we can be a hospital for sinners where everyone is welcome.

We are called to be a church of compassion for the sheep. That is the next image in this text – for they seemed to be sheep without a shepherd. This image of wandering sheep suggests the need to be gathered, a task that requires the hard work of the shepherd.

Jesus then offers another image of potential ingathering, the harvest. There are biblical precedents for interpreting “harvest” language in at least two different ways.

A harvest is traditionally seen as an occasion for joy — a time of abundance, a time of rejoicing and celebration over the blessings that have been given.

Verse 37 clearly makes two points. First, the harvest is plentiful, which is a positive image, which suggests that this harvest may be the good things of the kingdom Jesus has been preaching and teaching about. These “good things” include all the healings and other miracles Jesus has been performing as evidence of the approaching kingdom.

Secondly, this verse points up the problem that makes the next section a necessity — “the labourers are few.” More labourers are needed, not to “rescue” a few before judgment comes, but so that more can be receive the blessings of God and His Kingdom.

Jesus is still the only one who can call disciples and commission them into service in the gospel ministry. But every Christian is called. It is the church's job to prepare men and women for discipleship. Each and every congregation must be a disciple making church. Creating disciples means opening Christians up to the possibility that the power of Christ can work through them with transforming power. Church was never about the building, it was and is about the people. Therefore what will 'Church' be like and look like in the future? We live in a time of opportunity to be 'church' in new ways. The world post Covid 19 will be different. How will you use your core values to be church?

Sing or Read:

- 1 Lord, your Church on earth is seeking
your renewal from above ;
teach us all the art of speaking
with the accent of your love.
We would heed your great commission :
sending us to every place —
preach, baptise, fulfil my mission,
serve with love and share my grace.
- 2 Freedom give to those in bondage,
lift the burdens caused by sin.
Give new hope, new strength and courage,
grant release from fears within :
light for darkness ; joy for sorrow ;
love for hatred ; peace for strife.
These and countless blessings follow

as the Spirit gives new life.

- 3 In the streets of every city
where the bruised and lonely dwell,
let us show the Saviour's pity,
let us of his mercy tell.
In all lands and with all races
let us serve, and seek to bring
all the world to render praises,
Christ, to you, Redeemer, King.

Hugh Sherlock (1905–1998)

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Loving Lord, you call and equip us to serve you. Watch over those who risk their own safety by caring for oppressed believers. Strengthen and protect all those who are persecuted for sharing their faith in places where living out their Christian faith in peace is not allowed.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Loving Lord, you empower us to live out our discipleship. Give wisdom, imagination and the strength to persevere to those who face apathy as they seek to live out their discipleship.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Loving Lord, you understand what it means to suffer for what is right. Give comfort and courage to those who are unjustly imprisoned, intimidated and tortured because of their faith. Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Loving Lord, you taught us to pray for those who abuse and hurt us. We pray for people who persecute those who hold different beliefs from their own; may they be touched by faith and their hearts be opened to love, that the world may be united in your love.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.**

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

The Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love and with those you ought to love this day and forever more. Amen