

Second Sunday of Trinity, Year A, 2023, Proper 6  
Genesis 18.1-8, Psalm 116.12-19, Matthew 9.35-10.8

“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.”

In Matthew’s compilation of materials Jesus teaches extensively as exemplified in the Sermon on the Mount. And besides the Sermon on the Mount there are other teaching discourses on Mission, Parables, Church and the End Times. Today we begin our reflections by locating the gospel we heard within the larger context of Matthew’s gospel.

Immediately after delivering the Sermon on the Mount Jesus heals and then calls Matthew, the tax collector and this is followed by four more healings. Jesus restores a girl to life. Jesus heals a woman. Jesus heals two blind men. Jesus heals a person who is mute. These healings all have people coming to him. The leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him. A woman ... came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak. Two blind men followed him, crying loudly, ‘Have mercy on us, Son of David!’ A ‘possessed’ man (a demoniac) who was mute was brought to him. (Matthew 9)

A key characteristic of Jesus’ ministry is that he cures and has power over unclean spirits. Unclean spirits in today’s parlance will include narcissism, lying, deceiving, provoking, misogyny, exploitation with little or no regard for Jesus’ teachings, or if not dismissing them having insufficient regard for such teachings such as “Those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Matthew 23.12) All this is accompanied by a certainty and absolutism which many do not share. A key principle of Christian life is based on God’s humbling of himself in Jesus Christ that we might die with him and be raised with him through baptism. The church commemorates her martyrs such as Saint Stephen, pictured in our stained glass

window, who believing that there is more to life than this life gave their lives for the sake of the Good News of God's kingdom, sustained by a growing symbiosis commitment informed and sustained by faith.

Today we catch a glimpse of Jesus's ministry in summary as he goes about Galilee.

'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.'

This ministry will be transferred to his disciples. What does Jesus observe as he goes about faithful to his sending? He observes that the people are like sheep who have no shepherd. They are lost in the confusions of this world.

Those whom Jesus calls are to go out and do what he does. They are to teach. They are to proclaim. And having been given authority they are to cure every disease and sickness. We can be sure that many feel uncomfortable about the notion of this God-given authority over every disease and sickness and the ministry of casting out. But there it is. We know many people today feel uncomfortable about Jesus' teaching in and outside of the church. Last Sunday we affirmed our adherence to the apostles' teaching. The bishop asked and the believer responded with 'true lowliness of heart', "Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?" "With the help of God, I will." (Common Worship, The Commission)

One must understand that Jesus' teaching as received and embedded in the living tradition of the Church is like a golden thread woven into the phrase 'down the ages'. It is not something that can be arbitrarily set aside. Even if its application may take us time, perhaps much time, to learn. The apostles' teaching based on Jesus' teaching is not like the morning mist that Hosea uses as a metaphor for the fickleness of people, "What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early." (Hosea 6:4)

Again today we catch a glimpse of how Jesus builds community. He does so by calling people to follow him that they might learn from him. To be a disciple is to be a learner. Someone who seeks the truth through following him and through attending to his teaching in like measure. For me one of the insights of the past weeks came through reading a little book with a few others by a former Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple. It had to do with his remarks regarding the French Revolution with its clarion call: Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité: Freiheit, Gleichheit, Brüderlichkeit (Geschwisterlichkeit). The first thing that got lost and quickly he observes was Fraternité (the bonds of fellowship), where one not only has regard for the other, but for the whole of the community, for the fraternity, for all brothers and sisters, all our siblings. As the French Revolution unfolded mere lip service was paid to Fraternité and soon the other two were lost as the ideal of Fraternité was lost that war might reign.

One of the conversations I had during the Street Party was with a visiting professor from the People's Republic of China, who shared with me that he had become a Christian only last year. Last Sunday we at Christ Church witnessed how people from Austria, Belarus, Czech Republic, England, Hungary, Japan, South Africa and Turkey, made a step in their Christian journey before witnesses, before us, the 'we are here' that is Christ Church before God. In a small way we witnessed how through the ministry of this local church and our sister congregations in Brno and Budapest we are aligning ourselves with the Great Commission to make disciples of all the nations with which the Gospel of Matthew draws to a close:

'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' (Matthew 28.16-20)

On the day of our baptism we become citizens of God's kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven. It should be easier for adults to know what this means than it is for many younger people. The adult with true intention, like my Chinese interlocutor

(Gesprächspartner) is fully aware that they are leaving one kingdom for the kingdom of Heaven. They may have had to calculate the cost. The kingdom of Heaven is a kingdom that is not of this world, but it is present where those who meet in his name, hear his word, share the heavenly food of the altar are commissioned to go out and make disciples of all the nations baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit having regard for one another

As I said above the mature adult who becomes a Christian is fully aware that they are leaving one household for another, one family for another. They are leaving the myriad kingdoms of manmade isms, the kingdoms of materialism, the kingdoms of acquisitiveness, the kingdoms of greed and selfishness (add your own) to inhabit the kingdom of Heaven in the present to the extent that we become mature in Christ, trusting in God's promises, but also seeking to live God's teaching as made known in Christ. Brothers and sisters it is easier to tear down. It takes time often years, even generation effort, faithfulness and prayer to build up.

it is a little surprising on reflection to discover that in first century Galilee there were already too few harvesters as Jesus observes. It was when I lived in Germany as a young man that I first became aware of the seasonal migrant workers, who came from Eastern Europe to help with the harvests in West Germany from Poland, Czechoslovakia... On our last visit to England as a family, where we stayed outside of Lichfield after having visited Lichfield Cathedral, where we encountered seasonal workers from eastern continental Europe. One of the concerns prior to the UK's historic vote per referendum to leave the European Union was how provision could be made for seasonal workers from mainland Europe to help with English harvests. I rehearse the above because Jesus uses this picture of the lack of harvesters in lived reality to encourage the Church to pray for labourers to play their part in making God known through teaching, proclaiming, healing and casting out. We too often see the calling solely in terms of those who are called to public ministry, but it is also a call to

prayer for each one of us to learn that we might teach, proclaim the Good News and heal in His name. This is what the Church does to this day. Through prayer, through the seeking reconciliation, the sacrament of reconciliation and thorough the laying on of hands healing is offered.

Hear God's call, follow God's example, observe Christ's teaching and be faithful in all things to God's commission. \*Ich bin der Herr, dein Arzt. I am the Lord that healeth thee.

End.

\*from Luther's translation of Exodus 15:26

Sally, Tanja, Aileen, Tunde, Christoph, Matt, Jady, Rosie, Adam, Robert, Frank, Ben, Gabe, Christian.