



14 June 2020

A service of worship to guide
reflections
Preacher-led

Welcome to worship. Today we're going to be looking at a passage from Matthew's Gospel, which ends chapter 9 and leads into chapter 10. In chapters 5-7 of Matthew's Gospel, we have Jesus' teaching given in the Sermon on the Mount. In chapters 8-9, we have a collection of miracle stories. The verses, we're going to reflect on today, move us into Jesus talking to his disciples about mission. We're going to think about the reading today in two parts.

Hymn: Singing the Faith 410

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.

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.

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)

We pray

We unite with the whole world in praising you, creator God.
We come before you with gladness and thanksgiving.
We praise your goodness:
we praise your faithfulness;
we praise your tenderness.
We are yours and we worship you.
We bless your name for ever.

Lord, you have called us to the privilege of service,
but, we have failed to serve.
You have given us the blessing of peace,
but we have chosen discord.
You have loved us as a shepherd tends his sheep,
but we have strayed from your way.
Forgive us, and show us the path of obedience and faithfulness
that your Son trod.
In his name, we pray. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Matthew 9: 35-38

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his

disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Comment

In these verses, there are two images used by the writer of Matthew's Gospel to describe the world through Jesus' eyes.

The first image is that of sheep without a shepherd.

Most of us know enough about sheep to know that without a shepherd, sheep will wander. And those of us who have ever watched "One man and his dog" on BBC's Countryfile, will know that with a good shepherd and a well trained sheep dog, sheep can be led to safety and a safe haven.

The writer of Matthew's Gospel describes the crowds around Jesus as "helpless and harassed". Without a shepherd, they were lost.

During this time of crisis and uncertainty, I wonder if, like me, you've sometimes felt a bit harassed and helpless. And if you have, that's OK. None of us have been in this place before. But, we're in this place with Jesus the good shepherd and we have his voice to guide us and his love to surround us. We have the prayers and support of others to keep us going. We can find our place of safety with Jesus.

But, not everyone has this certainty to help them through the difficult days. And like Jesus, we also can see the world around us as being like sheep without a shepherd.

The second image is that of a harvest field . . . a field ripe for harvest, ready for picking and reaping . . . but not enough workers to get the job done.

In a world of uncertainty and crisis, Jesus reminds us that there are people hungry to hear the word of God and the good news of his Kingdom.

But, that leaves a question. Who are the shepherds for God's people today? Who are the harvesters who will go out and share the love of Jesus with others? The second part of our reading will

answer that question for us. The shepherds and the harvesters are you...me...us!

Hymn: Singing the Faith 480

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me down to lie
in pastures green; he leadeth me
the quiet waters by.

My soul he doth restore again,
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
e'en for his own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through death's dark vale,
yet will I fear no ill;
for thou art with me, and thy rod
and staff me comfort still.
My table thou hast furnished
in presence of my foes:
my head thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me,
and in God's house for evermore
my dwelling place shall be.

(Psalm 23)

Matthew 10: 1-8

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and illness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: "The kingdom of heaven has come near." Heal those who are ill, raise the dead. Cleanse those who have leprosy: drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

Comment

On Monday's Look North, Archbishop John Sentamu was interviewed by Harry Gration. The context was the Black Lives Matter protests held all over the country this last weekend. When asked by Harry about the advice he would give to people wanting to bring about change, the archbishop said that violence never worked. But, he encouraged people to "be the change they wanted." I found those words both interesting and challenging. And I think they chime with our Gospel passage.

In these first verses of chapter 10, Jesus sends the disciples out by themselves. Until this point in Matthew's gospel, Jesus has been the focus of mission. Now, he hands over and shares that role with his disciples. They are sent out to be and do the work of the kingdom.

Today, Jesus sends us out to be the shepherds . . . to be the harvesters . . . to do the work of the kingdom. It will be through our words . . . through our actions that the kingdom of God will be preached. We need to be kingdom people to bring the change we want. We need to be kingdom people to bring others to Christ.

That might seem difficult in our current situation. Some of us may be shielding. Some of us may be self-isolating. Most of us aren't going out much. But, there are still things we can do. Pray. Ask people if we can pray for them. Phone someone who is living on their own.

Be the change you want to be. That's kingdom work. Amen.

Hymn Singing the Faith 552

Here am I, Lord.
I've come to do your will;
here am I, Lord.
in your presence I am still.

(Northumbria Community)

We pray

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.

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.

Loving Lord, you send us out to be shepherds and harvesters. In our current situation, show us how we may share the good news of Jesus with others.

Loving Lord, you ask us to be hope givers to the world. So, we pray for those who are ill, anxious, bereaved. We pray for all our key and frontline workers.

We bring our prayers in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

Hymn Singing the Faith 662

Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred?
Are you still prepared to follow?
Have you made a choice to remain and serve,
though the way be rough and narrow?

*Will you walk the path that will cost you much
and embrace the pain and sorrow?*

*Will you trust in One who entrusts to you
the disciples of tomorrow?*

Will you use your voice; will you not sit down
when the multitudes are silent?
Will you make a choice to stand your ground
when the crowds are turning violent?

In your city streets will you be God's heart?
Will you listen to the voiceless?
Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start,
will you share your faith with the faithless?

Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith
and believe it could be different?
Will you share your views using words of grace?
Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

*We will walk the path that will cost us much
and embrace the pain and sorrow.
We will trust in One who entrusts to us
the disciples of tomorrow.*

(Jacqueline G Jones)

Blessing

Go to serve; go to love;
go to bring healing; go to bring peace;
go in the strength of the Father;
go in the power of Jesus;
go united by the Spirit.
Go – and know his grace. **Amen**

And the blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Spirit be with
us this day and for ever more. **Amen**

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