

Reflections for 4th July 2021

5th Sunday after Trinity

Travelling light

Our gospel reading this week includes Mark's account of Jesus calling and sending out his twelve disciples – to share in his work, and to prepare the way for his coming. Jesus gave them some warnings, some advice, and some encouragement – and he gave them some rather unconventional advice about packing:

Take nothing for the journey

He encouraged the disciples to be open to those who welcomed them, and the message they carried, while also being prepared for those who would not welcome them. And he told them not to take any money, or a bag, or food, or spare clothes, which is a bit like saying to us, 'Don't take your credit cards, or your luggage, or your car'. So, we might ask, did Jesus really mean that we should take nothing with us? Perhaps Jesus was deliberately exaggerating, in order to make a point, but we have the challenging example of people through the history of the church who have taken this call literally. We may all have times when we sense God's call for us to leave behind something that is precious to us, so that we are free to move on.

I think those words of Jesus are showing us what kind of journey he is inviting us to join. It is not primarily about speed, or distance covered, or about reaching a particular destination at all costs. It is about travelling with open hearts – open to God's prompting and leading, open to those who ready to welcome us, and open to discover signs that the kingdom of God is close at hand. And, above all, open to discover God in the journey.

In similar accounts in Luke's gospel of Jesus sending out first twelve disciples, and then seventy-two, he sent them out to 'proclaim the kingdom of God' (9. 2), and he also said:

When you enter a town and are welcomed ... tell them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." (Luke 10. 9)

Revd John Waller

Lord of the journey,
may we learn to go where you lead,
with our hearts ever open
for the coming of your kingdom,
that is always close at hand. Amen.

Bible readings: Ezekiel 2. 1-5; 2 Corinthians 12. 2-10; Mark 6. 1-13

Story: 'The Burning Bush' (the calling of Moses, based on Exodus chapter 3 and 4)