

## Tarves Parish Church - Sunday 14 June 2020



**“When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd .” (Matt 9:36)**

### INTRODUCTION

Last week I suggested setting apart a special space where you might spend time with God, both on Sunday mornings either on zoom or with the written worship materials from the web-site, and during the week. I also said I would be suggesting activities linking to this space each week.

This week in our worship we will be hearing of the call to work for the kingdom. As we make tentative steps from lockdown out into the world, consider what you can offer to God. Could it be the work of your hands; the ideas that come to you; the longing you have to share with others: put on the table something that symbolises your work or your leisure: something you use every day that you can dedicate to God.

### Praise CH4 509 Jesus calls us o'er the tumult

1 Jesus calls us o'er the tumult  
of our life's wild, restless sea;  
day by day his voice is sounding,  
saying "Christian, follow me."

2 As, of old, St Andrew heard it  
by the Galilean lake,  
turned from home and toil and kindred,  
leaving all for his dear sake.

3 Jesus calls us from the worship  
of the vain world's golden store,

from each idol that would keep us,  
saying "Christian, love me more."

4 In our joys and in our sorrows,  
days of toil and hours of ease,  
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,  
"Christian, love me more than these."

5 Jesus calls us; by thy mercies,  
Savior, may we hear thy call,  
give our hearts to thine obedience,  
serve and love thee best of all.

### The Word of God: St 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 labourers are few; <sup>38</sup>therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.'*

*10 Then Jesus<sup>a</sup> summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. <sup>2</sup> 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; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;<sup>b</sup> <sup>4</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near."<sup>c</sup> <sup>8</sup> Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers,<sup>d</sup> cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.*

## **Reflection**

An American minister tells the story of a woman who travelled many miles to a church conference held in a certain place every summer. When she was asked about her regular attendance, the woman explained that as a child she had been in that place when the preacher of the day was handed a message as he went up into the pulpit. The preacher opened the note and announced that World War II had come to an end. Ever since, the woman explained, she had come to that gathering hoping for news as good as that.

Perhaps during this time of lock-down, while our buildings have been closed, you have had an opportunity to think about why you attend Church regularly (or for that matter why you don't!) Today our bible reading reminds us that the message the Church has to proclaim is good news – the good news of God's love for the world. Jesus tells his disciples to go and proclaim that, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand".

In this passage we see Jesus at work forming leaders with people as different as Matthew the tax-collector, who collaborated with Rome, Simon the Zealot for whom such collaborators were traitors, John, the beloved disciple and deep thinker, Peter the impulsive activist. So many underlying tensions in that group! And yet Jesus brings them together and sends them out to work for the kingdom of God. After his death and resurrection they (with one exception) will be the leaders entrusted with the good news – "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" - God's reign of love has begun - and that good news is the same good news with which we have been entrusted today.

The first disciples had to learn how to share that good news. And in the same way we too need to allow ourselves to be shaped and formed into people who can share the good news in our time. So how can we learn from the way Jesus teaches his first disciples?

Well first of all Jesus leads by example. We are to look to Jesus example. In one short verse Matthew gives us a summary of Jesus own ministry – Jesus has travelled around the whole area, proclaiming the good news of the coming of God's reign of love - teaching people and healing them. The disciples have been with him. They have seen this for themselves. And it is their turn now – what they are being asked to do is follow Jesus own example.

The second thing that the followers of Jesus need is to have compassion – Jesus views the people around him with compassion – they are wandering around aimlessly like sheep without a shepherd. He recognises they are “harassed and helpless”. They are powerless to change their own situation. If you have been listening to the daily coronavirus updates and briefings as the weeks have gone by, you will no doubt have noticed the increasing frustration expressed by media and individuals as they question the speakers – surely that is partly caused by the sense of helplessness we have about our current predicament – physical, mental, social, economic. Harassed and helpless is not a bad description of society today. Compassion it seems is in short supply. How do we learn to view the world with more compassion?

We need compassion but compassion on its own is not enough – Jesus call to go and share the good news is a call to action – the disciples are to go and do what Jesus has been doing. Go and cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons – just like that! And there is a challenge here as we struggle both with the snail’s pace that is often the way of the institutional church and with the very cautious approach to moving out of lock-down. How in the present circumstances do we balance the Gospel call to action with its call to have compassion for those who are vulnerable? And what about those who have now been rendered vulnerable because of the economic crisis?

The challenges that face us a society and as a community of faith today are huge but they were huge for Jesus first disciples too. Rejection, poverty, persecution,— they would experience all of these and more besides. They must have felt vulnerable as they visited the villages. But still Jesus sent them out and he made sure that they were empowered for the task. And that empowering came in two ways. Firstly the disciples are named and sent out in pairs— they were to be company and support for each other. And secondly Jesus gave them his own authority. The disciples would make mistakes as they sought to exercise that authority. Jesus was no fool he knew that. But he gave them permission to do just that.

Later, after Jesus death the gift of the Holy Spirit was a sign and seal of that authority. And today Jesus invites us to go out and share the good news, in his name and with his authority. How will we do this? Where do we see God’s reign of love at work in our families and our communities at this present time? What are the situations in which compassion is needed? Who are the harassed and helpless who need to hear the good news of God’s love for them? How will the Church proclaim the good news of God’s love to them when our buildings are closed? Gift bags and telephone calls are a great start but where do we go from here? There are no easy answers to these questions but that should not prevent us from asking how we might each day share the good news of God’s love with our neighbours.

And in case you need a reminder of that good news, let me tell you about Catherine of Genoa. In 1473 Catherine of Genoa, an influential lady of her day, had a powerful experience of God’s love for her. As a result she gave up a privileged life to care for the sick and poor at a hospital. And she wrote these words

“As for heaven, I guess you’ve noticed, God put no doors there.  
No God did not. And don’t you wonder why?  
That’s how God’s love works.  
All merciful – standing there with arms wide open,

God is waiting - this very moment –  
to embrace us and take us into splendid beauty and kindness.

And so let me leave you with a couple more questions to ponder. How can we help to ensure that the message the Church proclaims is always the good news of God's reign of love? Think about what might God be asking you and me to do today and throughout the coming week to proclaim the good news of God's reign of love in our homes and in our communities? Then let's go and do it.

### Pointers for Prayer

- Those suffering from or bereaved by the corona virus
- The NHS, its staff in hospitals and GP practices as well as the other emergency services and volunteers
- Scientists and others engaged in the struggle against Covid-19
- The Government and Scottish Parliament as they guide us out of lockdown
- Family, friends and neighbours, those most affected by the lock-down and those finding it difficult to move forward
- All those in education as they seek to reorganise schools for the safe return of children to classes
- The Church that we might offer a faithful witness to Christ through this time
- Those who organise, pack, deliver and receive bags in Tarves.
- Other people and situations who are in your hearts today.

**Praise 521** Children of God reach out to one another!

1 Children of God, reach out to one another!  
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;  
to worship rightly is to love each other,  
each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a  
prayer.

2 For he whom Jesus loved has truly spoken:  
the holier worship which God deigns to bless  
restores the lost, and binds the spirit broken,  
and feeds the widow and the fatherless.

3 Follow with reverent steps the great  
example  
of him whose holy work was doing good;  
so shall the wide earth seem our Father's  
temple,  
each loving life a psalm of gratitude.

4 Then shall all shackles fall; the stormy  
clangour  
of wild war music o'er the earth shall cease;  
love shall tread out the baleful fire of anger,  
and in its ashes plant the tree of peace.

### Next Sunday 11.00am Worship (Service commences 11.15am)

If you would like to be added to the e-mail list for the link to Sunday's live worship gathering on zoom or join in on your landline please contact Susanna Tel 851345 or e-mail [smbichard@aol.com](mailto:smbichard@aol.com)

### Pastoral Matters

The Minister is available to deal with urgent pastoral matters Tel 851295

**Care for the Community** if you are aware of anyone who needs help of any kind please contact Ruth 851887

**Tuesday 11.00am** Session Coffee Morning

**Wednesday 7.15pm** Community Bible Experience Catch Up – for more details and link to meeting contact Alison Tel 851295