

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." John 20:21.

At its root, the meaning of the word Mission means sent or to send. And Jesus was sent by God to us. He shared the good news of God's love through his own life. When Jesus ascended into heaven, he sent his followers in turn to go and make disciples of all the nations. That mission is passed on down the centuries to every Christian. That has always been quite a scary thought for me, that I am called to take the good news and make disciples of all the nations. I have always envisaged that to be a bit like the encyclopaedia salesman in the days of old, knocking on the doors of strangers, trying to offload masses of heavy books. It's been a great comfort to me that while that is one way of spreading the word, there are many other ways too. It is a comfort to me that there have been many who have gone before me and to whom I can look for guidance and inspiration.

Our two readings this evening name just two of those people. The first is Philip. That is Philip the Evangelist and not Philip the Apostle. He is first mentioned in Acts Ch 6, as one of seven deacons, chosen to care for the poor of the Christian community in Jerusalem, to free up the apostles to take care of matters spiritual. He later travels to Samaria where he spreads the news of Jesus the Messiah and performs miracles and heals many. In our reading, we learn of how he is directed by the Holy Spirit to approach a man who is reading the prophet Isaiah. He lands up spending time with the man, teaching him about the words of Isaiah and what they meant. The man is so moved by Philip's words that he asks Philip to baptize him. This effectively is the start of the Ethiopian Church. I take two comforts from this text: one that when the opportunity is there for me to share the good news, I don't have to do this on my own. I will have the guidance of the Holy Spirit always. He will tell me and show me where the opportunities are and he will put the words in my mouth that I need to have. The second comfort is that what Philip did was a relatively small and simple act – he read and talked with a man in a carriage. He shared his passion with that man. The consequences of his actions were far reaching. But I can see that I don't need to go out thinking that I need to go and start a whole church in a different country. I just need to do something small and simple, which could have far reaching repercussions that perhaps aren't immediately obvious, or possibly that I will never know.

The second is of Apollo. He was a confident and bold preacher, sharing all that he knew of the way of the Lord. But his knowledge was incomplete, and when Priscilla and Aquila crossed paths with him, they were able to teach him more and tell him about Jesus Christ. This enabled Apollo to go on and to teach with even more confidence. He was able to convince the Jews on his travels that Jesus was in fact the Messiah and prove his claim with the Scriptures. Again, I am comforted by the fact that I will not be alone, going out on my mission. Just as God put Priscilla and Aquila in the way of Apollo, so too will the resources I need be available to me when I need them.

These are just four of the people, Philip and Apollo, Aquila and Priscilla, that answered the call and were sent out to spread the word of God, and the good news of Jesus Christ to strangers in the strange lands. Across the ages, there are very many more that are well known, some not so well known ones and then there are those that are not known at all.

This morning, in the closing prayers of our services I was struck by these words: "Send us out into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory". I wonder how often we think about these words in between Sundays, and are mindful of how we can live and work in our small ways to the praise and glory of our King.