

During the weeks of Lent we shall be exploring the five marks of mission.

These were developed by the Anglican Consultative Council in 1984 and they are hallmarks by which the vitality and activity of the church can be measured.

The five marks have been represented in this way.

Tell
Teach
Tend
Transform
Treasure

Tell – to proclaim the good news of the kingdom.

Teach – to teach, baptise and nurture those new to the faith.

Tend – to respond to human need by loving service.

Transform – unjust structures of society. To challenge violence and pursue peace and reconciliation.

Treasure – to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

As we explore them over the coming weeks we can ask ourselves if we should be paying attention to one or more of these aspects.

There may be something you think you might add to this or an aspect of one of these marks that should be more prominent. The aim of exploring these is to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we need to see ourselves through a different lens.

Before I explore today's topic "Tell" (to proclaim the good news of the kingdom) a moment to reflect.

The influence of the marks of mission has grown but is not widespread. For example these were not explored when I was at

theological college in 1998...or if they were it was in such a low key way they didn't make a great impression. The five marks of mission wasn't a topic during my curacy...but it has been through Revd Terry's curacy.

I was thinking about someone whose training was much more recent than mine, coming into church leadership and wanting to lead a church that could be considered healthy because they reflected these marks of mission...but doing so because it was expected.

The question I asked myself. Is it sufficient to develop these aspects of a church because it's thought to be a good thing? This is what a church ought to be.

What came to mind was the passage from 1 Corinthians 13 so often used at a wedding. If I have the faith to move a mountain but have not love...I am nothing.

We may decide doing the right thing is better than not doing it...but I believe the Good News that we TELL – begins and ends with Love.

Love must lie at the centre. Love must be the motivation. Without love, all our actions...are worth nothing.

Today's topic is TELL – to proclaim the good news of the kingdom – how valid would that be without love?

Our bible reading is a traditional one for the beginning of Lent. Lent is 40 days because throughout the bible the number 40 occurs again and again and most importantly, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness. Having overcome the trials and the temptations he begins his teaching ministry and we read of the return to his hometown.

When we think of Telling the Good news, there are broadly two scenarios. The first is that someone comes to hear what you have to say. That's what happened for Jesus. His reputation had spread like wildfire and the people of his hometown came to hear what he had to say.

So Jesus chooses what he wants to share with them because the ball is in his court. On this occasion – Jesus is the evangelist – the bringer of good news. He chooses a passage from Isaiah. And in the bit after our reading declares that he is the fulfilment of the passage. He both speaks the good news and lives out the good news. He brings hope to the poor, heals the sick, feeds the hungry and so on.

Actually, as we know, it rather backfired in his hometown, they simply couldn't get their head round the fact that the bloke who used to run Jesus Joinery is the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy.

So the first scenario is someone coming to hear the good news.

The second is the opportunity to Tell the good news to someone one to one, but before we do that we have to listen. We have to listen to them. What are their questions? What are their issues? What aspect of our good news is relevant.

Have you noticed that Jesus sometimes asks what appears to be really dumb questions. A blind man comes to Jesus and Jesus says "what do you want me to do for you?"

It just seems like the silliest question ever but what we learn to understand by it is...what it is people want to know, or have problems with, or are troubled by.

I very much enjoy speaking about the freedom we gain in Jesus Christ and the joy of becoming fully and authentically our true

selves. That something I think is amazing Good News...but that might not be what someone is exercised by.

We have to earn the right to be trusted and we have to learn to listen. When the time is right and the Holy Spirit nudges you in the ribs, you share something relevant of the good news of the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Are we in a church that tells the good news?

We do in the Liturgy we use to shape worship.
The good news of what Christ has done is told in the Eucharist.

We sing of the good news in the worship songs we use...be they more modern or classic hymns.

We also live the good news in the quality of our welcome and the invitation to join in the worship and take part in the Eucharist. Our actions are saying "this is for you".

We proclaim the good news when we hold a study course as Revd Terry is doing...exploring the faith and sharing together what we are learning. This isn't some kind of academic exercise...the good news shapes the way we think and live and relate to each other.

We tell the good news to the children at the Primary school when assemblies are taken or they hold services here. We tell the Good News at the Christingle services when a great number of the community come to worship on Christmas Eve.

We also tell the good news in the more private encounters we have with those who are troubled or in need. It might be words, it might be actions...but we are witnessing to the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Yes – we Tell the good news. We speak it and we live it.

We have something wonderful to share. God is for us. God is on our side.

God is not a magic fairy who waves his hand and fixes all our problems...that's not the good news...the good news is that God is with us and for us and beside us whatever we might encounter and that's just this life.

There's further good news in the promise of eternal life. We have so much to tell.

What must remain at the heart of all that we could say – is the person of Jesus Christ. Ultimately...he is the very best news of all.

Rev. Jon Hutchinson, 26 Feb 2023