

North West Wiltshire Pastorate
Worship for Sunday June 14th 2020
Led by the Revd Sarah Simpson

Good morning and welcome to worship today.
Let us join together as the people of God.

Called and named,
With fears and vulnerabilities laid bare;
We join with the first apostles and the saints of all ages,
In a mission of witness, work and wonder,
Called by God the father, with the authority of Jesus the Son,
And equipped by the Holy Spirit.
Let us worship God.

We will now sing together, 'Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy'.

Our opening prayer comes from the
United Reformed Church Prayer handbook;
Let us pray,
Jesus, there is heaven in your eyes of compassion-
Noticing human fear and tiredness,
And yearning to see people gathered and refreshed.

Jesus, there is heaven in your voice of possibility-
Knowing that the harvest is ready,
Good fruit in lives that seem bruised and dry.

Jesus, there is heaven in your touch of wholeness:
For hearts and bodies strained and scarred
Good news comes with healing hands.

Jesus, heaven is near, when you are near;
The kingdom is here, for you are here.
Save us, summon us, show us, scatter us –
To discover the realm of good news,
And the reign of grace.
Amen.

Our reading comes from Matthew's gospel beginning at chapter 9, verse 35 and ends at chapter 10 verse 8

The workers are few.

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 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."

Jesus sends out the twelve.

He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, 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, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."

*This is the word of the Lord,
Thanks be to God.*

A few thoughts ...

Were you ever one of those children who was part of a group that would always be caught doing something ill-advised in school but only your name was called out? Regardless of whether or not you were the instigator or your reason for joining in, you were the one 'named and shamed'.

Perhaps you were the kind of child whose name was called out as the one who was a shining example, whose behaviour or work set the standard for everyone else.

Or maybe yours was the name never spoken allowed, either for positive or negative reasons, your invisibility was your superpower.

So would anything in your past history of naming possibly shape your reaction to this gospel?

Is it favourable? Is it too exclusive?

Perhaps you look at the job description and think “rather them than me”.

It's a strange one, Matthew has paid great attention to detail, not just naming the disciples but in some cases noting family connections but what interests me is that he begins with an overview of Jesus' ministry and what it entails. Is the sheer volume of work required being stated so that those chosen know what is before them? Jesus adds to this by saying the workers chosen are few and the task before them seems disproportionate to their number.

So would you sign up, and where do you begin?

The weeks following Trinity Sunday give a chance to reflect both on where we are going and where we need to be. The temptation is either to change everything or change nothing, neither is really an option but sometimes the thought of such change can be overwhelming – and while all change is rooted in God, that has to be held alongside the messy, everyday practicalities of life, and especially life as it is presently.

Remember my comment about the family links – why does Matthew consider that important?

Could it be because it gives us context, these men are a part of a family, they have jobs, professions, they have the gifts and abilities needed but they also have an understanding of the complexities of relationships. They are not called cold to this, and they have already shared something of Jesus' ministry before this semi-official naming event.

We are not called to rush ahead, however tempting it may be and certainly in these times we are walking with some trepidation towards finding what shape the Kingdom may take in the future. Like those called and named we may be overwhelmed by the size of the task facing us, but as our Moderator said to me this week, ‘May does not mean must’, what is important is that we take our time and respond as we are able and we do so without feeling guilty or pressurised; we cannot constantly care for others if we ignore our need to care for ourselves. And that a lesson taught not in school but through the realities of life.

Amen.

We will now sing together, ‘The kingdom of God is justice and joy’.

Our prayers of Intercession.

Let us pray,
We think of the complexities of the relationships
Which are interwoven in our lives;
For the specific needs of each;
The responsibilities within each
That ask of us different things
At different times.

Loving Lord,
Equip us to serve you as we serve each other;
Give us grace to consider the needs of others
And where needed, to put those needs
Before our own.

Give us courage to encounter situations
That we have limited knowledge of,
But know we cannot shy away from,
Even if we query what use we can be.

Give us strength when much is being asked of us,
And we seem unable to say no;
Even though our bodies and minds cry
Out for a time of rest.

Give us prayers for the times when words fail us;
When we are confronted by situations whose
horrors defy description, and we struggle to know
how to help.

As families continue to struggle at this time,
We pray for those who feel pulled
In different directions,
As we all search for the new normal,
Help us to hear what each other
Is trying to say,
And to find the empathy needed

For inter-generational dialogue,
Knowing there are many calls on our time,
But all are equally deserving of our love.
Amen.

We say together the Lord's Prayer,

Our Father,
Who art in heaven,
Hallowed by thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
For ever and ever,
Amen.

Let us share remotely in the grace, to and for each other,
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
Be with us,
And remain with us,
Now and forever
Amen.

Until we meet again, consider the call to action as
you have discerned it in your life.
Have you fulfilled it?
Amen.