

**Text: Matthew 9:35-10:8 (NIV)**

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2020**

**Brightons Parish Church**

**Let us take** a moment to pray before we think about God's Word. May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

**In the last few months**, even in the last few weeks, there has been a lot of transition, often difficult transitions. We saw last Sunday, our young people moving up the schools years, and our primary 7's going into S1 may not have had the usual transition they were expecting. I wonder if they felt "in at the deep end" rather quickly. Or what about our school leavers? Those going on to work, college, apprenticeship or university – do they feel ready for the transition they are now facing as they go into the workplace or their new campus?

**Transitions have also** been felt by those of us who are beyond these stages. As we came out of a tight lockdown, the transition to a measure of freedom was unsettling, especially if we were maybe shielding. So, this summer we've all felt the impact of transitions and often these can be difficult experiences which we don't feel ready for.

**I suspect that the disciples** were feeling a bit like that in our passage today. Up until this point, it has been Jesus alone who has shared the good news that the Kingdom of God is breaking into this world. He has healed the sick, raised the dead, set people free and made known the love, power and ways of God in word and deed. But now, a transition comes.

**As Jesus sees the crowds,** His heart wells up with compassion for them, with such deep concern that He is moved to action. Jesus looks out over that multitude who need help, who need good news, and He discerns that the time is ripe to begin the next stage of His ministry, and it is going to involve the disciples. **He says to them:** ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’ (v37-38)

The next stage of the ministry of Jesus is to have others involved in sharing the work; one man can only be in one place at one time, and so the plan of Jesus is to involve others. He instructs the disciples to pray about this, but lo and behold, what happens? **We read:** ‘Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive

out impure spirits and to heal every disease and illness...These twelve **Jesus sent out** with the following instructions: ‘...Go to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: “The kingdom of heaven has come near.”’ (10:1-2, 6-7)

I wonder how the disciples felt at that point. I wonder if they felt ready for this transition? As Jesus calls them to Himself and then sends them out to make known the Kingdom of God in word and deed, were they shaking in their boots? Had they realised that they were going to be the answer to their prayers? **I doubt it,** because that wasn't how rabbi's worked back then – you learnt from the rabbi, and after many years you might get to carry on his teaching, but you certainly weren't expected to do the miraculous or make known a provocative message!

**So, here is Jesus**, sending out a group of inexperienced nobodies; in fact, in their midst is a hated ex-tax collector, another is an insurrectionist (or terrorist we might say today), and still another will prove to be a traitor. Jesus has deliberately selected the dregs of society and instils them with the charge to go share His message, His love and His power! It is mind-blowing – but it is the way of Jesus: He calls the most unlikely of candidates and asks them to share in His ministry.

**The same is true of us friends**, because every individual who calls themselves a Christian, every member of a church, is called to share in the ministry of Jesus and go make known the Kingdom of God through word and deed. Now, you might say, that this was only for the Twelve, the apostles, those closest to Jesus and who

helped found the church. **But if you read** the book of Luke at chapter 10, you'll see that Jesus sends out the 72 other disciples to do exactly the same thing and they come back reporting that the forces of evil submitted to His name. 'Apostle' simply means 'sent one', a representative, and yes the twelve do hold a special place and authority since they were eye-witnesses, but let's remember, **Jesus said to them**: 'go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.' (28:19-20) What did Jesus command them? Go and proclaim the kingdom of heaven has come near and meet the needs of this broken world through His love and power.

So, we are all called to go share the good news of God's love in word and action. **Do we feel ready for this?** Probably not, but Jesus doesn't really seem to take that

as a serious excuse. Do we know what to do? I doubt it, I often don't, but if we don't try to go and share then at least two questions might arise.

**First, do we care enough** about others? Remember, Jesus was filled with such compassion that it brought about this transition for the disciples. Jesus didn't just feel a little pity or a lukewarm concern; He cared enough that He did something. If we don't respond to the call of Jesus to share the love of God in word and deed, maybe it's because we simply don't care enough about others.

**Secondly, do we care enough** about Jesus? Specifically, do we see Him as Lord, as King, as the one to be obeyed? You see, Jesus instructed the disciples to pray: 'Ask the Lord of the harvest...to send out workers' (9:38) and then what

**does He do? Jesus sends out the Twelve. He does it. He sends them out. So, Jesus is claiming to be Lord of the harvest, claiming to be God of all creation. So, if we don't respond to the call of Jesus to share the love of God in word and deed, maybe it's because we simply don't care enough about Jesus.**

**What's to be done then, brothers and sisters? Do we care enough about others? Do we care enough about Jesus? Will we heed His call to share the love of God in word and deed in the Braes area? I hope we will, I hope we'll respond, and I want to give you a few ideas to get started.**

**Firstly, prayer.** From the place of prayer sharing flowed. So, we need to get praying, and in a few weeks' time we'll start a preaching series on prayer. But, equally, start

praying now. Maybe use the 'Thy Kingdom Come' prayer idea – of having 5 people you're asking God to help find faith in Jesus. Or simply pray, 'God, help me make You known to the people I meet today.' So, let's get praying.

**Secondly, sharing** the love of God in our words is important, and not just for the confident, extroverted and qualified people because the membership of the Church of Scotland is going off a cliff, and even in the Braes area it is going down across all 7 churches. If that is ever to change then there must be the sharing of the love of God in our words because the young people I see coming along to church, who I see as active in the life of churches, are people in their teens, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s who are talking about faith and who want to know about this faith. Most young people do not need more activity or

another organisation to belong to, but the one thing they are not getting anywhere else is the good news of God's love for them and to share that we have to use words.

**To make this very practical for you**, we are running an online Alpha Course starting Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup> of September and more details are in the notices. So, let's get asking and invite someone along, because last year's course was so encouraging, many people grew in faith, and many more are joining online Alpha at this time.

**Finally, sharing the love of God** in our actions. Jesus met the needs of the people around Him. So, who are the people around us? Do we know our neighbours' names? Or, have we had a conversation with someone who needs a helping hand? Or, do we donate food to the Foodbank

**when we're down at the supermarket? There are people and needs all around us, and if we create space to become aware of them and reach out, then in meeting them we can share the love of God in action.**

**Friends, our core purpose** is 'to invite, encourage and enable people to be disciples of Jesus.' That begins with an invitation into relationship with Jesus, to be part of His family, and so we must vocally share this with others. But being a disciple of Jesus requires us to follow His example, and Jesus shared the love of God in action as well.

**May we be a people who share the love of God in word and in deed, caring enough for others and for the command of our Lord. May it be so. Amen.**

**We close our time together with our final hymn...**

**HYMN**    *MP-167 Give me oil in my lamp*