

Believing in Creator God

Luke 10:1-7

Consequences are part of life - we looked at this a couple of weeks ago as we explored the nature of our faith and how it inspired us to Shine like Stars in the Universe -and I was telling you about my missing Driving License saying I belong to this area — well, the good news is that the license arrived by post last week and the scare-mongering from Debbie in the DVLA office was unnecessary... the postal system did its job.

Consequences of our move to Epsom have meant a lot of changes that have not been of our choosing - they have been inevitable... one decision has rolled out a whole raft of consequences from Gavin leaving work, Aidan needing a school, Joel finding something to study nearby and so on... The consequences of the Pandemic are evident in our new habits and shopping, the way we are expected to conduct ourselves in public and the choices we make... We are not able to visit our family in the North East as the infection rates are high and the sickness is spreading...

But instead of thinking about the consequences of being in a situation of inevitability and sickness, lets focus on what it means to acknowledge that God is indeed our Creator... Last week, it was Harvest Festival and we noted our responsibilities as people, 'crowned with Glory and Honour' from Psalm 8. Good stewards over creation and what that looks like - check back to last week's content for a reminder. We believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth. What does this look like as followers of Jesus and as 21st Century disciples?

In Luke's Gospel, we find this account of Jesus' mission and equipping of the Church set within a context of harvest time. Creator God has a Kingdom he longs to share with the whole of his creation and the people who mirror the work of the labourers in the harvest-fields are the body of believers whom Jesus sends out with clear and precise instruction for how to share the Good News of God's kingdom. God the Creator has the authority over the creation. It is his by nature and design. It is good and the Goodness is something which God wants all people to know, experience and live in... Our role as people who know the Creator is then to purposefully -and not alone - to share the Good News.

I've had a look at the number 72 - remember how it says that Jesus sent out the 72 'others' - these are in addition to the 12 disciples he has chosen and appointed as his designated leaders of the church. 72 is the people... the ordinary, faith-fuelled believers who are unnamed, and their mission is to go out in pairs... 36 pairs, 3x12. The tribes of Israel going out to all the nearby and further away places as heralds of God's kingdom. We belong to God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, by virtue of us being made in his image and also by adoption into his family as sons and daughters, or co-heirs with Christ.

Romans 8:16-17 reminds us that "*The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*" The 72 are the extended family. The Mildreds, the Bobs; the John and Sallys of the church... the ones who prefer to pass unnoticed under the radar in church and not draw attention to themselves and what they do - sometimes because they are fearful that what they do isn't good enough... It is this extended family that Jesus asks to buddy-up and sends out in pairs to herald his coming.

Not a complicated task, a simple and direct expectation of sharing the good news of the Kingdom, that kingdom, prepared and made by Creator God, just for you... for everyone who will receive the worlds of blessing with which they arrive. There are plenty willing and ready to receive the word of peace and the good news you hold, but there are those whose deliberate intention and purpose in life will be to derail your message and the purpose of your sending... There are wolves who are eager to misdirect the message of peace, there are wolves who are eager to peddle a half-truth about the kingdom of God. There are wolves who would steer you away from the face of Jesus and his wonderful sacrifice for you on the cross to focus on other things with plausible and velvety tones of reasonableness. The message of Jesus is the gospel of peace. The good news of the Kingdom of God drawing near and the message that Jesus is Coming to you, be prepared to meet him, to be transformed by him and to have your life made new in the light of his presence and love. It is good news. It is the hope for nations. It is light for a dark world... And the enticing wolfish words that would steal the lambs from their purpose should be resisted... It is maybe worth bawring in mind at this point two things from other gospels: 1. That Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and the Gate to the Sheepfold in John 10 and that Jesus has promised that he will be with us always to the ver end of the age in Matthew 28:19& 20; "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age." Now that 'surely' is a 'for sure' an absolute promise of certainty...

Today, the seventy-two - or all the tribes - or all followers of Jesus, are buddied up and sent with the promise of Jesus' own presence. You are not alone. If one falls, the other stands guard and raises the alarm - which goes like: "Catherine, It's not going well, can you lend an assist?" A text message, phone call or email for prayer support, training and coming alongside... the ministry is not that of a lone-ranger but of team. As Jesus is part of the team of Creation itself, Father, Son and Spirit, so we are team in our witness to his love in our missional activity in the world.

Notice that this is a sending rather than a calling... A calling draws people to hear and respond, a sending propels people from the presence of Jesus, with his authority to do the work he has equipped them for.

The harvest fields are full, says Jesus, and points to the Creation that God has placed there and sustained... therefore the other harvests of Creation, the harvests of heaven also need taking into account and bringing into safety.

Jesus sends the followers to be heralds, firm and fixed in purpose and message. The know him and they know the father. They rely on the provision of God and not on their own abilities - we are on a level playing field here - Billy Graham and Ethel McMiggins are each fully reliant on God to see them through the task of being sent as heralds. The motivation is that having been with Jesus and having got to know him, we trust the voice and the agenda of the one who sends us. We mustn't get distracted and we should do what we came for and finish the job.

The Harvest is not over until Jesus comes again in glory... until then, we honour the work of Creator God when we share the good news of his sending, directly and graciously, reminding people that it is better to be with Jesus than alone in a world where death lurks and danger presses in... Hear his voice, the call of the Kingdom and step out faithfully and with the confidence that you are not alone!

Amen.