



*As the
Father
sent
me, so
I send
you . .*

**Readings to support
the 5 Marks of Mission**

BACI LENT 2018

'As the Father sent me, so I send you'
Bible Studies for the
5 Marks of Mission
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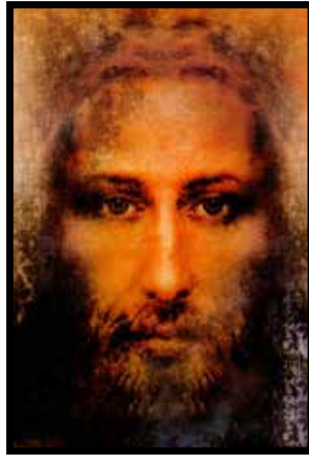
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Biblical Association for the Church of Ireland

Lenten Bible Study 2018



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so I send you..'*

Readings to support the
5 Marks of Mission

Editor: Canon Ginnie Kennerley

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David Ritchie

INTRODUCTION

***'As the Father sent me,
so I send you . . . '***

'PEACE be with you', the risen Jesus greets his disciples in the upper room. Then: ***'As the Father sent me, so I send you'***. He then breathed on them and said, ***'Receive the Holy Spirit'***.
(John 20. 21- 22)

The word "mission" means simply "being sent". This encounter, and these instructions, as recounted also by Matthew and Luke, are the impetus for all Christian mission worthy of the name. Christ sends his followers, his disciples, into all the world to share his love and his teaching (Matt 28.19-20), to make new disciples whom He will send in their turn. We are to go in God's peace, and we will succeed only through God's gift of the Holy Spirit. We are to "stay in the city" until we are "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24.49).

We need to be well rooted in this ground for Christian mission, before we even contemplate the Anglican Communion's "Five Marks of Mission", and certainly before we seek to respond to them in detail. Mission is ***being sent out***, not by any human authority, but by the Lord himself. We are to go in His peace, and we are not to go until animated by the Holy Spirit. If for his ministry Jesus himself needed the outpouring of the Spirit at his baptism, how could his disciples possibly dispense with such an anointing?

Yet human beings do need structure of a kind, guidelines, a plan, a strategy. So the Anglican Communion's 5 Marks of Mission, originally issued by the ACC back in 1984, offer us this kind of road-map as we contemplate Jesus' call to "make disciples" for him.

First, though, we need to ***be disciples*** ourselves, to be aware at least that we are striving and seeking God's help to be true disciples, following Jesus as he has revealed himself to us and seeking always to be faithful. Only then can we dare ***share*** the Good News of the Kingdom, whether we are sent out across the world or to the house next door.

For this reason it is suggested that at the beginning of each Bible Study session we take time in both silent and shared prayer to open ourselves radically to Christ's presence and recommit ourselves to Him.

An introductory prayer such as this one may be helpful:

*Come to us, Holy Spirit, as you came to the apostles.
open our minds that we may see the hidden things of God.
Pour love into our hearts like a flame of fire,
that our lives may be charged with your power,
to do God's will on earth
and help his people to Heaven.*

After opening with prayer, Bible Study groups will vary in their procedure, but each will start either by reading the introduction or pondering the reading itself. Other passages of scripture may suggest themselves to group members and such ideas should be welcomed before proceeding to the Questions, which can be supplemented by others according to the group's needs.

It is suggested that ample time should be allotted for each Bible Study; and anything less than 90 minutes is likely to prove inadequate. Domestic and other pressures can surely allow this amount of time for a matter so central to our lives as Christians. It is also suggested that at the close of each study, the participants always be asked the same question: ***What will you take from this time we have spent together?*** And the final prayer time should help deepen this reflection.

The 5 Marks, or aspects, of Mission, are all grounded in the first – ***to proclaim the Good News of God's Kingdom.*** For it is only when we have been moved to do this by an awareness of God's overwhelming love and God's call on our lives that, along with fellow disciples, we can hope to ***teach, tend, transform and treasure*** effectively.

Our warmest thanks are due to the five creators of these Bible Studies for Lent 2018: the Rev Jack Kinkead, the Rev Lesley Robinson, Mr Philip McKinley of DCU, Canon Paul Houston, and Mr David Ritchie of the RCB. Both they and the BACI committee hope the studies will be helpful; and we look forward to your feed-back, which should be sent to Chairman Rev Dr William Olhausen or to myself.

Thank you!

 for BACI

1. TELL – proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God

Jack Kinkead

Introduction

“THE CHURCH is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members.” This famous saying, attributed to Archbishop William Temple, gives Christians serious food for thought, at any time, and in any place.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus regularly spoke of the expectation he had of his followers, to be “salt”, and “light”, and “leaven”. A little salt enhances what is good, and preserves from decay; a little light can be seen from a great distance in darkness, or can throw enough light to illuminate a path; a little leaven acts as an agent for transformation. The point is made gently, but abundantly: the community of those who identify with Jesus and become his disciples, is not to be self-serving. Christian living is not about creating an exclusive club; it is about becoming part of a journey, in faith, to the heart of God. Gathering in parishes and congregations, we do gather as a community, but within the wider community. The message of the Gospel is not to be guarded jealously, but generously shared and spread far and wide.

Realising this imperative for mission, the first Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion is “to proclaim the good news of the kingdom”. In a real sense, this first mark is the lynchpin for all the others – each one being rooted in the conviction that the good news must be proclaimed.

The time Jesus spent with his disciples was patiently and meticulously planned. He allowed them to develop their own understanding of his significance, revealing his true purpose and identity little by little. By the time of his ascension, they were prepared to continue the work of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. Jesus’ patient and gradual revelation of himself was to allow the disciples to discover for themselves the reality of God’s indwelling, and to understand more deeply the call to humble service that Jesus modelled.

In our time, we too discover the reality of God’s immanence, and the radical power of transformation which is unleashed through following Jesus, and being open to his Holy Spirit.

Yet to follow Jesus’ call, to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom is a daunting prospect for us all. If we are too pushy with the gospel message, we risk alienating people. If we are too timid, the gospel’s power is diminished.

As we read of Jesus sending out of the seventy, we realise that these first disciples encountered the same challenges that daunt us today. We begin to see ways of dealing with challenges as they arise; and we are shown a model of mission, that means we need never lose heart, even when faced with hostility to the gospel message.

As we consider our own responsibilities in Christian outreach, we should remember the saying: "Don't keep the faith; share it", as well as "Little children, love one another". (1 John)

Reading

Luke 10:1-16

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ²He said to them,

"The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. ³Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road.

⁵"Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" ⁶And if a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹cure the sick who are there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you."

¹⁰"But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹"Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near." ¹²I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

¹³"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But at the judgement it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades.

¹⁶"Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

Notes

v. 7. It wasn't long before the message of the Gospel brought about Gospel scroungers, who sought to profit from the disciples' preaching and teaching. Hence, don't move from house to house looking for better food and lodgings.

v. 13-16. These verses seem out of place today, but they respond to issues of Jesus' time and place. The heart of Jesus' call was a message of peace. Many of his contemporaries were not interested in peace, but wanted all out war, with the Samaritans (whom they hated) and the Romans (ditto), to bring about God's kingdom of justice for the people of Israel, at the expense and overthrow of her enemies.

The judgement which would befall central Galilee was the result of not heeding the message of peace but pursuing violent rebellion, which brought down the full wrath of the Roman Empire. To pursue this path of violence was to go in the opposite direction to God's way.

How often do we hear God accused of being a bloodthirsty maniac? To even scratch the surface of this part of the passage is to uncover the reality of God's desire for peace – and hopefully reinforce our own conviction to proclaim the Good News of his kingdom.

Questions

1. Do we find the idea of a plentiful harvest and few labourers overwhelmingly daunting, or exhilarating?
2. "There is little point wasting time and energy on those who set themselves against the gospel, so we should travel light, and move on." OR "*No one is beyond the love of God, and it is not up to us to shut the door to the Kingdom.*" How do these conflicting ideas influence the contemporary church?
3. To share in the gospel is a great privilege, but not necessarily easy. From where do we draw strength when we are dejected or rejected?
4. How do we proclaim the good news of the kingdom to a world already cynical and closed to the Christian message?
5. What are you taking home from our time together?

Prayer

Eternal giver of love and power,
your Son Jesus Christ has sent us into all the world
to preach the gospel of his kingdom.
Confirm us in this mission,
and help us to live the good news we proclaim,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Informal prayer for now or later:

Take some time to pray as individuals and/or as a group for God's guidance, strength, and direction for our mission in our own journey in faith.

Pray for opportunities to proclaim the good news of the kingdom, overtly and discreetly.

Take a few moments to pray in thanksgiving as individuals for those who have proclaimed the good news of the kingdom to us.

Pray for those who have yet to hear the good news, and for the humility to listen to them, even as we share our faith in God's love.

2. TEACH – teach, baptize and nurture new believers

Lesley Robinson

Introduction

THE PASTORAL Introduction to the Service of Baptism in the Book of Common Prayer describes baptism as marking “the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives, the first step in response to God’s love”. This journey is embarked upon by candidates of any age, but for many traditions, including the Church of Ireland, the baptism of infants remains the norm. With this development in the early Church came the expectation of continuing Christian education and faith formation. As Philip Schaff wrote in his *History of the Christian Church (1910)*, “Infant baptism is an act of consecration, and looks to subsequent instruction and personal conversion, as a condition to full membership of the church. Hence confirmation came in as a supplement to infant baptism.” Ninety years later, Michael Perham remarked that “what needs to be recovered is the sense, not that I was baptized, but that I am baptized. What happened then committed me to a style of living that is still being worked out” (*New Handbook of Pastoral Liturgy, 2000*). That style of living could be termed “discipleship”, and the aim of the teaching and nurturing ministries of the Church must aspire to transforming believers into disciples – pupils, that is.

As Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, pointed out, Jesus did not send his disciples out to recruit members into his Church but rather to make disciples, basically telling them to go and make learners, encouraging people to embark on the journey of discovering what is the gift of God. The goal of education in the Church, then, is to form communities of believers whose lives witness to God’s eschatological vision, and whose words and actions model the Kingdom of God.

Discipling believers is based on relationship. Jesus called the twelve to “follow” Him and to “be with Him”. Jesus knew that the best way to influence others is by listening, modelling (example), instructing (teaching), facilitating fellowship, giving active support and honest feedback, and keeping the goal in mind. Each of these was based on relationship.

The Apostle Paul used the same model: “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Discipling others involves teaching others how to: live the Christian life (Acts 2:43-47), read the Bible, understand it and apply it in their lives (2 Timothy 3:16-17), pray for

what really matters and listen to God (Luke 11:1), recognise and deal with temptation, discouragement, fear, sickness, and other personal struggles (Matthew 11:28), be integrated with other Christians, in a local church (Acts 2:42), recognise and develop their God-given gifts and be motivated to use them to serve Him and others (Romans 12:6), and to be co-labourers in the task of worldwide evangelism (Matthew 28:18-20). The second mark of mission challenges all of us to take this task seriously.

Readings

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Romans 12:1-2, 5-8

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

⁵ We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶ We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸ the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Notes

Matthew 28:16-20

This passage is called the Great Commission. It is the final instructive word from Jesus to His Church. From the beginning, Matthew has emphasised Jesus' teaching - the Sermon on the Mount, early in Jesus' ministry (Ch. 5-7) constitutes the largest body of Jesus' teaching in the New Testament. Now Matthew portrays Jesus' last act of ministry as teaching his disciples the basics of Christian ministry: going, baptizing, making disciples, and teaching.

v.16. The mountain is often used in the Bible to designate a meeting with God (cf.Ex.19; 1 Ki.19:8-15; Mt.17:1-8).

v.17. An interesting contrast - some worshipped, some doubted, even though Jesus had been crucified and risen from the dead.

v.18. Matthew speaks often of authority (7:29; 9:6; 10:1). God has given Jesus authority, and Jesus exercises authority now as well as in the final judgment. His authority spans heaven and earth. There is no time or place where it does not apply.

v.19. The risen Jesus gave this commission to the original disciples, but it applies to us as well. He calls us to make disciples of all people, to go out into the world to teach the truth of God's love and his commands.

v.20. This is a sign of his deity and it is a comfort to know that Jesus is always with us. He will never leave us or forsake us no matter what the situation.

Romans 12:1-2, 5-8

v.1b. Torah law required Jews to observe a complex system of animal sacrifices to atone for sin. Only animals without blemish were acceptable offerings (Lev. 23:18). Now the requirement is no longer ritual slaughter; rather each one of us is to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice – in lives committed to doing God's will, lived in faith and lived out in faithfulness. We are to present our bodies for God's purposes on Sunday in worship and on Monday in the workplace. There is no moment or circumstance in which the obligation does not apply.

v.2. Having called us to give God our bodies, now Paul calls us to give God our minds. The Greek word *metamorphousthe* is the word from which we get our English word, metamorphosis. As a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly, so it is by the grace of God that we who were one thing (conformed to this age) can be transformed into something wholly different—people who are godly and able to discern God's will.

v. 6 - 8. Paul mentions seven specific gifts (*charismata*) in these verses. We tend to think of a "charismatic" as one who has the gift of speaking in tongues, but the word *charismata* is broader than that. It refers to spiritual gifts in general rather than just speaking in tongues. Significantly, in this list Paul does not even mention the gift of tongues, but deals with that gift at length in 1 Corinthians 13-14, where he treats love as the supreme gift, with faith and hope completing the trio which "remain", while prophesy comes to an end and tongues (not edifying without interpretation) will cease. In these verses of Romans 8, Paul considers all Christians to be charismatic in that God gives each of us one or more gifts to be used in service to Christ and his body, the Church.

Questions

1. What can you or your church do to nurture the faith of believers, transforming them into disciples? To what extent do you need to nurture your own faith first?
2. What approaches do we have for dealing with doubt in relation to matters of faith?
3. For many of us theological education ends after Confirmation. How can your parish/church community provide ongoing education for all ages?
4. How can people's gifts be discerned and used for the building up of the community and the church? Have you gifts that you could offer that are not currently being used?
5. What are you taking home from our time together?

Prayer

Heavenly Father,
fill us with your welcoming Spirit of truth,
that we may faithfully teach, baptize and nurture
those who come to believe in you.
Help us to use our gifts to build up your kingdom
as we seek to help believers become disciples
who imitate the example of your Son,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

3. *TEND - to respond to human need by loving service*

Philip McKinley

Introduction

THERE are two parts to the third Mark of Mission: the first is the process of identifying “human need”, whether informally through a chance encounter or conversation, or more formally perhaps through a piece of research. Once we have recognised specific human needs, from there the Third Mark of Mission compels us to “respond by loving service”.

The first passage, Jeremiah 29:4-7 helps us with our first task; identifying human need. The Book of Jeremiah covers a fascinating period of history: before, during and after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in 589 BCE. The processes and stages of this destruction (and proposals for re-construction) occur both on an individual level (for the prophet Jeremiah) and also on a national, corporate level (for the people of Israel).

Destruction is a normal aspect of human experience and can have the effect of stripping us back to our bare essentials, our fundamental needs. It can allow us to appreciate the personal destructions (relating perhaps to housing, relationships, finance, work, sickness and death) that can occur over the course of one’s lifetime, but also to recognise on a much wider level the collective destructions we may face as a human race (economic, social, political and environmental).

At the centre of the Book, in Jeremiah 29:4-7, we find a fascinating 2,500- year-old antidote to destruction, which is still immensely pertinent and powerful today. It is a piece of survival teaching designed to assist the humiliated exiles of Israel to endure in the hostile surroundings in Babylon. The teaching must have been effective, because the Israelites defied all odds, survived their enforced exile and seventy years later were able to return to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem and re-establish their religious civilisation (albeit transformed following Exile).

Jeremiah’s wisdom is very straightforward and pragmatic. There is a four-fold methodology for reconstruction and survival:

1. Build houses and live in them
2. Plant gardens and eat what they produce
3. Multiply there; do not decrease
4. Seek the peace and prosperity of the city

These four pillars speak to the very core of human experience, which are encapsulated for example in Manfred Max-Neef's, *Fundamental human needs and human-scale development*, which sets out nine critical areas of human need:

Subsistence; Protection; Affection; Understanding;
Participation; Leisure; Creation; Identity; Freedom.

The Swiss theologian Karl Barth once famously said that a Christian should always have "the Bible in one hand, and the newspaper in the other". Thus Jeremiah's four pillars can be used as a check list to sketch a contemporary human needs-analysis and to identify which areas speak most pertinently to us. For example, what does "build houses and live in them" imply in the 21st century Irish context? From that analysis, we can then approach the second task: how to "respond by loving service".

Mark 10:41-52 begins with Jesus' teaching on leadership and power: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many".

Many of the world's problems are rooted in unequal power relationships, so we must tread wisely when entering any "responder/receiver" dynamic. On both sides there can be hidden presumptions, expectations and even manipulations. In healing blind Bartimaeus, Jesus sets the right power dynamic for service, by simply asking, "What do you want me to do for you?"

There are so many human needs in the world. If we try to personally respond to them all, we ourselves can become quickly burnt out (and then become the person in need). If we are overwhelmed by the sheer scale of human need, we can become paralysed and ineffective. Indeed some of the needs we encounter will be ethically contested, some hard to define, and some deliberately silenced, as Bartimaeus was by the crowd.

So how do we recognise true need, above the alternative needs that may distract us? How do we model Jesus and in the midst of the crowd, "stand still" and open ourselves to another person's need, as Jesus did by saying, "Call him here"?

In healing Bartimaeus Jesus said, "Go; your faith has made you well". In Hebrew, the word for "wellness" is *Shalom*, which can also be translated as "peace", "fulfilment" or "wholeness". Indeed, Jesus' name is a verb, which means, "the one who saves/makes you whole". So in "responding by loving service", the ultimate goal must be as Jeremiah commands, the *Shalom* of those around us and those in need.

Readings

Jeremiah 29:4-7

⁴ Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. ⁷ But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Mark 10:41-52

⁴¹ When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. ⁴² So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." ⁴⁶ They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." ⁵⁰ So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." ⁵² Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Notes

Jeremiah 29: 4–7

These instructions from Jeremiah relate specifically to the situation of the Jewish people deported to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon in 597BC and how they should behave under the conditions of the 70-year exile which the prophet foresees for them (v.10). As such, they have been followed down the centuries by Jewish diaspora communities around the world.

Mark 10: 41–52

v.41. The reason for the anger of the ten against James and John was the request of these disciples (v.37) to "sit one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory", thus indicating that they were more interested in power and prestige than in service.

v.52. Note the immediate result of Bartimaeus' healing: he follows Jesus "along the way". The earliest description of Christians was "followers of *The Way*". (Acts 9:2; 11:26).

Questions

1. As you reflect on Jeremiah 29:4-7, what specific human needs rise to the surface? Share these with one another and explore whether there are collective concerns about society arising within the group.
2. "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city". Do we seek merely the flourishing of our own church or the flourishing of the wider community in which we live? What are the advantages of serving in the wider context?
3. Do we have the courage to witness personally to the love and power of Jesus Christ, by responding to the needs of individuals which confront us?
4. Are there practical examples you can share of the Third Mark of Mission in action?
5. What are you taking home from our time together?

Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

The Prayer of St Francis

4. TRANSFORM – transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence, and pursue peace and reconciliation

Paul Houston

Introduction

IN SCRIPTURE, both in the Old and New Testaments, there is strong emphasis on peace, justice and reconciliation. Surely, the Gospel is about the Kingdom of God, the conversion of men and women, but also **changing the structure of society in which people live**.

What does the word justice mean? Certainly there must be a sense of solidarity with all, fairness and equality. "The important thing is to train citizens for greater responsibility and once again gain a sense of solidarity." (*Hans Kung*)

In the Good Samaritan story, the concept of helping one's neighbours is extended to helping one's enemies. Human beings live in community, living in solidarity with one another.

Solidarity is a movement I heard about in Poland last summer, when I visited Gdansk. It was a movement founded to bring change in Poland, led by Lech Walesa. It brought together workers, intellectuals and clergy to challenge the communist government. After the first visit of Pope John Paul II in 1979, things changed. He stood in Victory Square in Warsaw, and declared that there was no place on earth where Christ's name could not be proclaimed. After a 10 - year struggle change did come. Not only in Poland, but in East Germany and even in the Soviet Union itself.

Christians played an enormous part in bringing change also in South Africa, bringing an end to apartheid. The churches faced terror and danger – but peaceful change did come!

I think Christians should be involved in politics for a number of reasons: (a) an obligation to spread the kingdom of God; (b) as Christians, Jesus orders us to love our neighbour as ourselves; (c) to give priority to the needs of the poor. Dehumanisation does not need to be permanent, as is shown in central and eastern Europe and Africa.

In every generation there have been people who have been prepared to say, "I will stand for things which will not come to pass in my children's or grandchildren's life time". For example, think of William Wilberforce and the Clapham sect – against the slave trade; Mother Teresa and India's "untouchables"; Mrs Emily Pankhurst and votes for women; the work of the Corrymeela Community in Ireland.

Readings

Amos 5: 21 – 24

²¹I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²²Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. ²³Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps.²⁴ But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Micah 6: 6 – 8

⁶With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Isaiah 58: 1 – 10

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. ²Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. ³"Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?" Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. ⁴Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. ⁵Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? ⁶Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? ⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. ⁹Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, ¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

Notes

Amos 5: 21–24

v.22. The Prophet widens his condemnation to take in the whole of Israel's way of worship. God does not accept the sacrifices – burnt offering, grain offerings or animals.

v.23. The worship led by songs and harps is condemned.

v.24. Most of the streams in Palestine are “wadis”. They remain dry throughout the summer. An ever flowing stream is a rare and comforting thing, staining the brown summer landscape a miraculous green.

Micah 6: 6–8

This passage is like a speech for the prosecution, questioning the subject of sacrifice and its usefulness.

v.7. Once it is conceded that sacrifice is an appropriate way to worship God, where does one draw the line? Thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my eldest son? Of course not! Everyone knows how horrified God would be at such an offering.

v.8. If sacrifice is not what God requires, what is our duty to God? “To do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.” This has often been called the high water mark of Old Testament moral teaching.

Isaiah 58: 1–10

v.1-3. Isaiah's prophetic voice will not allow the people of God to seek repentance without their participation in justice. These indicate God's people have been crying out for deliverance, answers and divine presence. The cries are not unlike those echoed in the 21st Century.

v.3-5. Isaiah warns us that our seeking after God is inhibited by the economic injustices in our midst. Isaiah has no patience for a fast of the kind that indicates a personal faith far removed from the concerns of our neighbour. We are invited to view our world with new eyes – God's eyes.

v.8. Then light shall break through . . . Light conveys the delivery of a message about God's grace to a world still in darkness.

v.9-10. Any desire for personal or national restoration must be sought through seeking justice and care for the afflicted in our midst.

Questions

1. What are we offering to God today and what would He value instead?
2. Should Christians be involved in politics?
3. Looking at your local community, pool ideas regarding local situations that you consider unjust. In each case, try to imagine the experience of oppressors and those on the receiving end of injustice. What seems to be the reason for the injustice?
4. What could we change – locally or nationally – to transform the issue?
5. What are you taking home from our time together?

Prayer

O God,
whose Son Jesus Christ cared for the welfare of everyone
and went about doing good:
Grant us the imagination and perseverance
to create in this country and throughout the world
a just and loving society for all.
Make us agents of your compassion to the suffering,
the persecuted and oppressed,
through the spirit of your Son,
who shared our sufferings,
our pattern and redeemer,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

5. **TREASURE** – *strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth*

David Ritchie

Introduction

IF WE PAUSE and ask ourselves the question “What do we treasure?“, I wonder how often do we picture something expensive, fragile, of sentimental value, created or unique. A family tradition in our household is to preserve items, be they letters, cards, crafts or creations made by our children. One such creation is lump of clay with our son Joshua’s hand print which I titled “Creation: marked by the hand of the maker“. This work of art has the makers initials on the reverse and the date when it was made. In this Bible study we will be considering another creation, that is the planet that God has gifted to all of humanity and we will be considering why and how we can protect this fragile gift.

Creation: marked by
the hand of the
maker.
Joshua Ritchie
(aged 3)



The Bible begins with, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1) with God concluding in verse 11 “that it was good“. So often our defence for protecting and preserving Gods creation stresses our responsibility for protecting creation for our people, be it those in the developing world or for future generations. Indeed, this is a laudable reason to protect creation but surely the more important reason should be that it is **‘God’s creation’** and we are called to be a people that worships Him.

But if God has given us such a wonderful gift, a gift that can produce fruit, landscapes that give adventure, and scenery that thrills our senses then why do we deface, deplete and destroy this gift, chipping away at its goodness, leaving barren hills and polluted rivers?

We have praised the creation of dams, bridges, fast cars that burn fossil fuels, and we have been slow to recognise the damage our creativity has had on God’s creation. The world needs a change of heart, a focus on strategies that will reverse the damage we have inflicted on our planet. And it is not enough to step back and point the finger; we are each called to change what we can, be it planting

fruit trees in our gardens, walking or cycling where we would formerly have driven, or sharing what resources we have so that others do not have to purchase more “things”.

And for Christians a change of heart should start with an appreciation of creation as given us to tend and care for by the God whom we worship.

Readings

Psalm 8

For the director of music. According to gittith. A psalm of David.

- ¹ Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
- You have set your glory
in the heavens.
- ² Through the praise of children and infants
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.
- ³ When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
- ⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?
- ⁵ You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honor.
- ⁶ You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet:
- ⁷ all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,
- ⁸ the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.
- ⁹ Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Genesis 1: 1 and 28–31

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

²⁸ God blessed [humankind] and God said to them: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

²⁹ God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground – everything that has breath of life in it – I give every living green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made and it was very good.

Notes

Psalm 8

v.1. “Lord, our Lord” repetition in Hebrew was often a means of emphasis, so “Holy, Holy” could be translated as “very Holy”; similarly this psalm begins and ends with the same words in v.1 and v.9, emphasising God’s majesty.

v.2. It is through our praise that God’s authority on the earth is established. We may believe in the absolute truth of God’s existence but it is in the proclamation of worship that God’s authority is established throughout the world.

v.3–5. The Psalmist acknowledges God’s creation as the source of his understanding of God’s majesty and as a consequence the lowly status of humankind.

v.6–8. Yet despite the unattainable holiness of God, He has entrusted to us all the work of His hands - all animals, birds and fish, but also their habitat, the wild, the sky and the seas. (cf. Genesis 1.28.)

Genesis 1: 1. 28-31.

v.1. It was God who created the whole earth; the planets, the seas and land, the vegetation, the creatures and finally human beings.

v. 28–30. Then God hands all creation to mankind to “fill”, “subdue” and “have dominion over”.

v. 31. This creation that God entrusted to humanity was not just good, it was very good.

Questions

1. Is there a place where you have been that speaks to you of the majesty of our creator God? Or a verse in our readings which best expresses for you God's glory and the need to treasure his gift of creation?
2. How might we interpret or misinterpret Genesis 1.28 as regards our relationship to God's creation?
3. Are there lifestyle changes that you could implement as an individual, as a family, or as a parish that could help reduce the burning of carbon-based fuels, reduce waste, share resources, or reduce consumption? What might stop you putting these into effect?
4. Consider that the creation that God entrusted to humanity was very good; then ask one another how different this is to the earth we now inhabit? Take the opportunity to pray for the healing and redemption of creation.
5. What are you taking home from our time together?

Prayer

Heavenly Lord,
you long for the world's salvation:
stir us from apathy
restrain us from excess
and revive in us new hope
that through our self-offering
and your abundant mercy
all creation will one day be healed
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Ever-living God,
your Son Jesus Christ
lived among us
and welcomed as his disciples
all those for whom his words of invitation
opened the way to
commitment and community
in your love.*

*Open our hearts today,
to fashion our lives according
to the responsibilities of loving service
which you shared with us
in your Son's life on earth.*

*Enable us to embrace the energy of our young people,
to enlarge our sense of parish and community
and to foster the discipleship of all your people
through the power of the Holy Spirit and
to the honour and glory of your Name.*

Amen.

Archbishop Michael Jackson

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY 2018

'As the Father sends me, so I send you'

READINGS TO SUPPORT THE 5 MARKS OF MISSION

TELL:

Rev Jack Kinkead on
proclaiming the good news of
God's Kingdom.



TEACH:

Rev Lesley Robinson on
teaching, baptizing and nurturing
new believers.



TEND:

Philip McKinley on
responding to human need by
loving service.



TRANSFORM:

Rev Dr Paul Houston on,
transforming unjust structures,
challenging violence and
pursuing peace and reconciliation.



TREASURE:

David Ritchie on
striving to safeguard the integrity
of creation, and sustain and renew
the life of the earth.



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