

WEEKLY SERMON

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We all have a job to do!

At the end of most communion services in the Church of England, we depart with the familiar dismissal 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord' and we all respond 'In the name of Christ, Amen!' In many ways this is one of the most important aspects of our worship. We have gathered to worship, confessed our sin, listened to God's word, shared in fellowship round the table of the Lord and then we are sent out in the power of the spirit to proclaim the good news of Jesus in our daily lives.

The gospel reading for Sunday, St Luke's day, Luke reminds us that God not only calls people to follow him but he also sends people out to speak about him from the personal experience in their own lives. When we respond to the dismissal with the words In the name of Christ, Amen – we are in fact saying something along the lines of 'Absolutely! I'm up for this Jesus! Count me in!' But as we leave the building and return to the business of our daily living, how long does that 'I'm up for this Jesus! Count me in!' actually stay with us?

As Jesus sent out the seventy, he highlights that reality that sharing the good news in daily life might not always be easy – like sheep in the midst of wolves. He also encouraged them not to rely on their own resources and abilities – carry no purse or bag or sandals. Their focus must be the proclamation of the message of peace – peace to this house!

To put this in context, peace was something that those living in New Testament Palestine were not actively seeking. They were living in an occupied country under Roman rule and if anything, were looking for an all-out war to rid the land once and for all of those nasty invaders and re-establish God's sovereignty and justice.

This vision of peace that Jesus was introducing was in many ways travelling in the opposite direction to the familiar trajectory of the Jewish nation of his day. Jesus rejected their vision of all-out war in favour of all-out love which he insisted was at the heart of God's kingdom and was available to all, including Samaritans and Romans - shocking!

This radical teaching was becoming infectious! And the sending out of the seventy newly appointed followers was a response to the growing reality that the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. So, as you leave church this Sunday, be it physical or virtually, don't forget to speak up for Jesus as you Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

The Very Rev Peter Howell-Jones
Dean of Blackburn

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