

**2017-06-18 Sue Diggory**

**Trinity 1**

***The Lord of the Harvest***

**Romans 5 v 1 – 8 and Matthew 9 v 35 – 10 v 8**

Today is the first Sunday of Trinity Season, part of 'ordinary time' when the endless weeks of 'church green,' stretch out before us – Easter is long gone, Ascension has been celebrated, as has the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and Trinity Sunday which marks our Feast of Title here at Holy Trinity was celebrated last week.

Were it not for the anniversary celebrations next month, and we will remain green even then, there would be nothing 'special' to punctuate the seemingly endless season of green until our Harvest Thanksgiving at the beginning of October; yet the long Trinity Season is so much more than merely being ordinary, so much more than the time before the next festival and I suggest that we need to look on it as a time of growing, a time when we use the weekly liturgical green as a reminder of growth, a reminder that this should be and can be a season full of new growth that will lead to an autumn harvest for us as we seek to live out our faith and grow in our discipleship of Christ.

Jesus is in Galilee and he has been busy! The disciples have been gathered and as Matthew tells us earlier in his Gospel Jesus has been moving amongst the towns and villages *teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people*. The crowds have been growing as reports of the miracles and the healings have spread around the region, and now we are told that Jesus looks out and sees his fellow countrymen as those who are harassed and helpless, as those who are in need of God's loving and active presence to be at work in their lives, as those he sees as *sheep without a shepherd*, as those who as he looks on them with heartfelt compassion he knows need to be drawn into the kingdom, as those who need to encounter the Lord of the harvest, as those who need to encounter the workers, the labourers that Jesus longs to see sent out, sent out in his name into the harvest field, the harvest field that is ripe for harvest.

And so, the disciples are gathered, commissioned and sent, sent out as workers for the Lord of the harvest, sent out having heard the words of Jesus to be those who are to do the works of Jesus, to be those *who proclaim the good news, [that] "The kingdom of heaven has come near."* [and to] *Cure the*

*sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.* They were being sent out 2,000 years ago as partners in God's mission, partners in his mission at this stage to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, no longer as those who stood in Christ's shadow, but as those who were to do what he did, to be as it were full members of the mission team, to represent him and all he had come to do.

I wonder how they felt as they set out for the first time without the physical presence of Jesus with them?

It was my intention to go on to talk about how we are being called to do the same and was going to talk in a rather general way about the need for us to be those who seek to grow in faith, to be those who are willing to respond to the commission we heard in our Gospel reading last week to be those who are ready to go ... *to go and make disciples of all nation .... baptising in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you*, but the events that began to unfold in the early hours of Wednesday morning intervened.

It was at this point that the events of the Grenfell Tower fire began to unfold and the reality of this terrible tragedy began to impact the lives of a small and diverse community on the north-western fringe of our capital city.

It was as Wednesday became Thursday that the images of the still smouldering building, of the ever-growing contributions of clothing and food, and of the exhausted fire crews, that I began to reflect, to reflect that this is the third time recently that we have stood in silence bringing innocent victims and their families before God.

It is the third Sunday when we have lit candles to aid our prayers, as we have struggled to find adequate words to express our pain for those mourning for lost loved ones, for those sitting patiently at hospital bedsides and now for those who are desperately waiting for news of missing loved ones, fearing that when the news eventually comes it will bring even more sadness as the last flicker of hope is painfully snuffed out. For those whose raw grief has turned to anger at the injustice that they feel as people whose voice has been neither heard nor heeded.

And as I reflected my mind turned to the words of Jesus, not to the words of our reading from Matthew as the disciples are commissioned for mission, but

to the synagogue in Nazareth right at the start of his ministry as he read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah

*The spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;*

To bring good news to the oppressed and to bind up the broken-hearted, is at the heart of the good news of the kingdom that we are being commissioned as Christ's 21<sup>st</sup> century disciples to take out from the safety of our churches into our community, yes the village here on our doorstep but also the wider community that we are part of, our nation and our world. We are being commissioned as those who are like the early Apostles 'sent ones,' those who God is calling to be 'labourers' in his harvest field.

Today we can respond to this latest tragedy both by ongoing prayer and by practical giving and it is right and fitting that we should do both ... but I suspect in a very short time the headlines will move on to something else and the needs of Manchester, London and Kensington will slip from our screens as another disaster happens somewhere in the world, and what will we do when that happens?

Will we continue to react to Christ's call on us to be his labourers in the harvest field, to be those who are willing to 'go' for him and with him, like the disciples to be prepared to go without his physical presence at our side knowing we have his spiritual presence, that of the Holy Spirit within.

Jesus calls his team to proclaim the good news of the kingdom, to bring his healing into the lives of the broken-hearted, to bring hope and peace to the harassed and lost in each and every age; to be those who look with his eyes of compassion into every corner of the world, not for our own comfort or gain, but simply because as those who know the love of Christ themselves we simply want to share that love with others, to pass on the good news of the kingdom, the good news that Christ came to proclaim as he sat in the Nazareth synagogue, the good news that the disciples were commissioned to take out that day over 2,000 years ago to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, the good news that we are being asked to take out today into our village and beyond knowing that;

Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
Compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

*Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)*

The question we must all ask is 'how willing are we to be workers in the fields  
for the Lord of the Harvest?'

Amen