**2020-10-18 Sue Diggory**

**St Luke 2020 - Luke 10 1 - 9**

It sounds simple enough, our Gospel text for today -- the sending out of the seventy in pairs to every town and place where Jesus himself intended to go.

It sounds simple enough, until we realize that we have already heard these instructions before, or to be more accurate the disciples had already heard them before.

All three synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us of Jesus' instructions to the twelve disciples, but only in Luke do we have the same instructions given to the seventy others and what we have here, very clearly, are instructions not just for a chosen few, but marching orders for all those who would follow Jesus, and as they say this is where it gets personal because it now includes us, we are all part of the ‘seventy’ others as we hear these words on the day that the church remembers St Luke.

So, we need to pay attention, for Jesus is speaking to us today -- travel instructions for missionaries, those who are being sent out by Jesus then and travel instructions for those who are being sent out today – us!

These instructions are very difficult for us today because they are so countercultural; they go against all we seek to be in 21st Britain, they cut right across our desire to be self-sufficient and in control, and of course at the moment many of us are reluctant to go out, let alone be sent out as we all try to follow the rules and keep ourselves and our families and friends safe, but being sent out does not necessarily mean leaving the comfort of home, it might for some but for many it may be simply the need to be more outward looking when it comes to matters of our faith.

Self-sufficiency is so important to our sense of satisfaction that there's a whole industry dedicated to equipping us to go out and test it in ourselves.

If you go to an outdoor adventure shop like Millets you are going to find everything you need for a gentle walk to Chartwell or an expedition to the highest peaks the country can offer. And I do mean everything: high-tech boots specialized for maximum performance in different activities; socks and clothes that keep rain out or wick sweat away from your body or trap heat in or breathe to let heat out; shelters that can withstand gale force winds but pack down to the size of pillow; food that never spoils, and takes up almost no space, and tastes like it's from a gourmet restaurant if you just add water; and so on and so on and so on.  You can be fully prepared for any contingency and these days you don’t even have to go to a shop, a simple press of the button and the internet will deliver to your door!

But let’s get back to our Gospel reading where the whole point of what Jesus is saying is ensuring that he's sending the seventy out completely unprepared!  They are to be utterly dependent on the people to whom they have been sent, some of whom will respond with hostility rather than hospitality and of course upon God.

Jesus makes it clear that it is not going to be easy, he tells them; not everybody can do this.  It's going to require an extraordinary amount of time and effort; and no matter how hard you try, you're not going to be able to control the outcome. Not words that controllers like me find comforting to say the least.

Some of the people you visit will not share in the peace you offer; sometimes whole towns that you visit will reject you.  But that's not the point.  What Jesus is most concerned about is ensuring that as many people as possible get to hear the good news that God's kingdom has come near.

That's the point; Jesus wants people to know how much they are loved by God, and how he longs them to respond to that love, and you never really know who's going to respond and who's not.

So what does that mean for us here in Crockham Hill?

Are we to go out in the same way – well not exactly as I suspect few if any of us are being called to go on mission to foreign lands but we are all part of the mission team and we do all have the responsibility to be ‘takers of God’s love to others’ and at this time this is likely to mean mission from the arm chair rather than physically getting out and about.

Perhaps it means making that phone call to a friend alone that you have intended to do for weeks …

Send that ‘thinking of you card’ to someone you know is a bit low at the moment.

Praying for someone to feel God’s presence and comfort at work in their life.

And if you are able to get out and about maybe popping into the church when it is open and lighting a candle for someone you are worried about.

As a doctor Luke would have known how important it was to listen to what people were saying to him, perhaps part of what we can all do this St Luke’s Day is rather than spend time worrying about whether or not we can ‘go out for God’ we might start ‘taking time to be with God’ and to listen out for what he has to say.