

Call to worship:

Loving Lord, your grace draws us to your presence;
your peace unites us in your love;
your hope inspires us to praise your glory.
May our worship be worthy of you.

Amen.

Praise: I, the Lord of sea and sky

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Chorus

Here I am Lord, Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them,
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them
Whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them,
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.

Video: Anagrams**All Age talk**

Anagrams

What are some of the things that we take with us on a trip or when we go on holiday? (suncream / hat / speaker etc.)

Very different for the disciples when they were sent out to share the good news. What did the disciples take with them?

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to help them.

As we sang in our opening hymn – here I am Lord.... As Christians we are called to mirror Jesus and the disciples, to ‘Go out’ into the world. But this passage reminds us that we don’t do that in our own strength.

Offering

Praise: You are wonderful

Prayers:

We come before you, gracious God, just as we are.
We come with our weaknesses and our vulnerabilities.
We come with our fears and apprehensions.
We come with faith and doubt.
We come to offer and receive.
We come to you, the king of love –
in the name of your Son,
and in the power of your Spirit.

Lord, you have called us to the privilege of service,
but we have failed to serve.
You have given us the blessing of peace,
but we have chosen discord.
You have loved as a shepherd tends his sheep,
but we have strayed from your way.
Forgive us, and show us the path of obedience and faithfulness
that your Son trod.
In his name, we pray.

We unite with the whole world in praising you, creator God.
We come before you with gladness and thanksgiving.
We praise your goodness;
we praise your faithfulness;
we praise your tenderness.
We are yours and we worship you.
We bless your name for ever.

Amen.

Video: Lord’s Prayer

Reading: Matthew 9:35 – 10:8 (9 – 23)

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

10 Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and

Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy,^[a] drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

Message: Sheep among wolves

We are going through one of the hardest and most bewildering times of our lives. It has felt like we are living in some kind of parallel universe at times, and although some of the lockdown measures are now being released, there are still going to be tough times ahead.

In the pre-covid world, it may have been tempting to think of the church as a hideout, the place where could gather to celebrate our blessings. Repeating our favourite stories and eating the food that has been prepared for us, it may have been tempting to think of ourselves as consumers of God’s love, chosen people who have been given more good gifts than we can open at one sitting: healing, forgiveness, restoration, resurrection.

Today’s gospel story adds a different spin. Here we find the Holy Spirit come knocking at the door, disturbing our comfortable place of meeting and reminding us that it is time to share. We are not to be consumers after all, but providers of God’s love, authorized agents sent out to speak and act in Christ’s name.

Can you imagine? There you are, perfectly content to be a follower, when Jesus comes home all worn out one day with his hair hanging in his face and his clothes ringed with sweat and dirt.

He looks around at those of you who have been with him all along and says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. I need some help – are you up for it?”

Then he holds his big hands out over your head and says a prayer that travels down your spine like a chill, giving you authority over demons, over disease—even over death—and when he has finished you open your eyes and look at each other to see if you can tell any difference.

Next you take a deep breath to test whether anything has changed inside. Do you feel wiser, stronger, more capable? No. Not really. Just blessed, sort of. Just tingly and curious and, well, ready—not for anything in particular, just generally ready for whatever is next.

Then he starts calling names. Leave your wallets and phones here, everybody. You’ll be traveling on foot—barefoot, actually—and you won’t need a backpack.

God will provide, and that will be easier for people to see if you don’t carry all your own provisions with you. Here’s what I need you to do: preach the kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the outcasts, cast out demons. I can’t wait to hear the stories you bring back. Now, off you go!

It does not happen exactly like that at church, or maybe it does. At the end of every service, while the last word of the last hymn is still ringing in the air, a voice from the front of the church says, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord! – or words to that effect. Those are not words for consumers of God’s love. Those are words for the providers. In short, they were given exactly the same things to do that Jesus himself had been given to do - but it did not have to be that way.

He could have reminded them of all that and insisted that they remain his assistants – but he didn’t. Instead, he transferred his ministry to them while he was still alive. He entrusted it to them. With no training and very little advice, he sent them out to heal wounds and restore outcasts and bring the dead back to life.

He also sent them out to preach the nearness of the kingdom. It was an essential combination, a powerful message - proclaim the kingdom while acting it out. What keeps nagging at me, though, is the way he sent them out—no money, no shoes, not even a walking stick. Why send them out with so much power and so few accessories?

Surely there might have had more impact if they had arrived in style like one of those battle buses, with something catchy painted on the side, accompanied by their own driver, caterer, and publicist. That would have had some authority to it, some prestige appropriate to their task, but apparently that is not what Jesus wanted for them.

The way Jesus set it up, they could not provide for others out of their own abundance: they could only provide for them out of their need. There they were, assigned with the authority to heal the sick and raise the dead, going barefoot from house to house, saying, "Excuse me, but may we stay with you? We can't pay you anything, I'm afraid, and we don't have anything to barter, but perhaps you could see your way clear to giving us a bowl of soup and a slice of bread?"

Apparently, there is a Buddhist custom all seekers of the truth spend at least a year of their lives as beggars. They go from village to village wearing nothing but a saffron robe and owning nothing but a begging bowl, asking perfect strangers to supply their most basic needs.

After that year is over, they are free to return to their former ways of life, but none of them returns the same person. What must it be like to own nothing, to have nothing but your own need, and to understand that the only thing you have to offer anyone else is what you yourself have been given? That whatever they give to you comes from what has been given to them?

What must it be like not only to talk dependence on God, but to live it everyday for a year, understanding that reliance on God equals reliance on the hospitality of others?

Over the weeks and months that follow, all of us are going to be doing a great deal of reflecting about our experience of lockdown. And no doubt, many of us will be reflecting on how often we may have been forced onto our knees in frustration as we battled the isolation and the loneliness.

Maybe we'll have discovered a greater need to rely on the present of the unseen God, and the comforting presence of his Spirit. Maybe we have been on the end of some of that hospitality over the last few months, where someone has stepped in to support you with an encouraging word, as well as some practical help.

I think there are going to be many stories that each of us will be able to share, stories of rescue, redemption and renewal, stories that may well have changed your life and mine forever. You may have been the receiver of this hospitality, or you may have been the provider. It doesn't really matter does it. But through these actions you have been blessed, encouraged, humbled.

What this experience has reminded us over and over again is this - when it comes down to being a provider of God's love, there is really only one provider, who sends us out with nothing at all and with everything we need: healing, forgiveness, restoration, resurrection. Those are the only things we really have to share with the world, which is just as well, since they are the only things the world really needs, perhaps now more than ever before.

Praise: Jesus calls us

1 Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
of our life's wild, restless sea;
day by day his sweet voice soundeth,
saying "Christian, follow me."

2 As, of old, apostles heard it
by the Galilean lake,
turned from home and toil and kindred,
leaving all for his dear sake.

3 Jesus calls us from the worship
of the vain world's golden store,
from each idol that would keep us,
saying "Christian, love me more."

4 In our joys and in our sorrows,
days of toil and hours of ease,
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,
"Christian, love me more than these."

5 Jesus calls us; by thy mercies,
Saviour, may we hear thy call,
give our hearts to thine obedience,
serve and love thee best of all.

Prayers of intercession

Loving Lord, you call and equip us to serve you. Watch over those who risk their own safety by caring for oppressed believers. Strengthen and protect all those who are persecuted for sharing their faith in places where living out their Christian faith in peace is not allowed.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Loving Lord, you empower us to live out our discipleship. Give wisdom, imagination and the strength to persevere to those who face apathy as they seek to live out their discipleship.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Loving Lord, you understand what it means to suffer for what is right. Give comfort and courage to those who are unjustly imprisoned, intimidated and tortured because of their faith.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Loving Lord, you taught us to pray for those who abuse and hurt us. We pray for people who persecute those who hold different beliefs from their own; may they be touched by faith and their hearts be opened to love, that the world may be united in your love.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen.

A sending out prayer

Go to serve; go to love;
go to bring healing; go to bring peace;
go in the strength of the Father;
go in the power of Jesus;

go united by the Spirit.
Go – and know his grace.

Amen.

Praise: Will you come and follow me?

Will You Come And Follow Me
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Go Where You Don't Know
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Let My Love Be Shown,
Will You Let My Name Be Known,
Will You Let My Life Be Grown
In You And You In Me?

Will You Leave Yourself Behind
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Care For Cruel And Kind
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Risk The Hostile Stare
Should Your Life Attract Or Scare?
Will You Let Me Answer Prayer
In You And You In Me?

Will You Let The Blinded See
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Set The Prisoners Free
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Kiss The Leper Clean,
And Do Such As This Unseen,
And Admit To What I Mean
In You And You In Me?

Will You Love The 'You' You Hide
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Quell The Fear Inside
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Use The Faith You've Found
To Reshape The World Around,
Through My Sight And Touch And Sound
In You And You In Me?

Lord, Your Summons Echoes True
When You But Call My Name.
Let Me Turn And Follow You
And Never Be The Same.
In Your Company I'll Go
Where Your Love And Footsteps Show.
Thus I'll Move And Live And Grow
In You And You In Me.