

My Jesus, my Saviour, Lord there is none like you
All of my days, I want to praise the wonders of your mighty love
My comfort, my shelter - Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am never cease to worship You

Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name
I sing for joy at the work of your hands
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have in You

Our Old Testament reading is Psalm 66 vs 1-9. For me this Psalm resonates how great our God is, how awesome is His power and is reminiscent of the Lord's prayer. It is a message of optimism from a God who will keep us safe and an invitation to all peoples to share in His love. The sharing of this message is something which our New Testament lesson focusses on.

Old Testament Reading: **Psalm 66: 1-9** New International Version

¹ Shout for joy to God, all the earth! ² Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious.

³ Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you.

⁴ All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing the praises of your name."

⁵ Come and see what God has done, his awesome deeds for mankind!

⁶ He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the waters on foot - come, let us rejoice in him.

⁷ He rules forever by his power, his eyes watch the nations - let not the rebellious rise up against him.

⁸ Praise our God, all peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard; ⁹ he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping.

Let's join together now in prayer.

Prayers of thanksgiving and confession:

Dear Lord, You know us better than we know ourselves. How we need to be rescued by You, how so often we succumb to the pressures of everyday life which distract us from You. How desperately we need to know that You forgive our foolish ways and that if we allow You into our lives that You will reclothe us in our rightful mind with 'thy coolness and thy balm' removing from our souls the strain and stress, so that renewed, our ordered lives will confess the beauty of Thy peace as we interpret Your love to those around us.

Here us, we pray, when we say thank You for all Your good gifts to us. Take a few moments to name them in your hearts now...

May we know Your love and support when illness strikes or bad things happen. Give us fortitude and strength to bear these problems as we continue to witness Your Holy name. Let's name our problems in our hearts now...

May we know and thank you for the great love that You expressed in sending Your only Son to die, redeeming us when we were unworthy. Take a moment now to breath the name of Jesus in your hearts ...

Dear Lord we know that Your love and care for us cannot be earnt - it is a gift freely given, so we come in prayer before You now to dedicate ourselves once again to You and that You will help us to live lives of love and service to those around us, in our families, amongst our friends and in our communities, whenever we see need.

We dedicate ourselves again to You now and ask these prayers in the name of Jesus who taught us to say:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done - on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,
For ever and ever.**

Amen

We now come to our **New Testament Reading** New International Version

New Testament Reading: Luke 10: 1-20 Jesus Sends Out the Seventy-Two

¹After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.² He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³ Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

⁵"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' ⁶ If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. ⁷ Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

⁸"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say,¹¹ 'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.' ¹² I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

¹³"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.

¹⁶ "Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me."

¹⁷ The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."

¹⁸ He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing

will harm you.²⁰ However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Hymn: **God's Spirit is in my heart** Dale & Richards **StF 404**

1. God's Spirit is in my heart,
He has called me and set me apart.
This is what I have to do,
What I have to do.

**He sent me to give the Good News to the poor,
Tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
Tell blind people that they can see,
And set the downtrodden free
And go tell everyone the news that the Kingdom of God has come,
And go tell everyone the news that the Kingdom of God has come**

2. Just as the Father sent me,
So I'm sending you out to be
My witnesses throughout the world,
The whole of the world. **He sent me...**

3. Don't worry what you have to say,
Don't worry because on that day
God's Spirit will speak in your heart,
Will speak in your heart. **He sent me...**

Message:

I've always wanted to say this. I mean - ooh the power!! Hands up if there any teachers in here? Or ex-teachers? Or wannabe teachers? C'mon - don't be shy. Hands up!!

So what are we going to talk about today? - I told you at the beginning so I hope you haven't forgotten already... Yes, that's right, teaching and learning, or learning and teaching if you prefer. We are going to be looking at the Luke reading we have just heard.

In the reading we heard that Jesus sent out 72 people to spread His Good News and to go out teaching. They had learned the Good News from Jesus who had learned it first from His Father God before the world began. So we've learnt our first lesson haven't we? Teaching comes first! When God taught His only Son. That's a deep thought isn't it... Have we just cracked the original conundrum? You know, the one about the chicken and the egg?

Come again? We say that don't we when we don't quite understand something. Come again? The fact is, our job is called The Great Commission (Matthew 28: 18-20), that is to say, to tell others about Jesus. 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 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

Anyway, God taught Jesus and He taught his disciples and they taught us and it's up to us to teach others until He comes again! That's quite a responsibility. Awesome

actually. But never fear, our Teacher is always with us. All we need is faith... And, boy, don't we need to be told that... time after time... when we slip back into the old ways... worshipping Baal... by which I mean following the world's lead, not God's.

When I was researching for today, it came up about the 72 people who were sent out by Jesus. Why 72? Some texts read it as 70, but there's a significance to the number, it being the number of peoples in the world, each one descended from a survivor of the flood, as envisaged in Genesis 10. The 70 are also the guardian angels of those peoples, but to get to 72 you need to add God... and St Michael, who represents Israel - albeit that latterly, he's been blessing M&S as well. In this context however, the subliminal message is that Jesus is sending His disciples to the whole world.

Another thing that stood out for me when I read Luke 10 was Jesus saying the disciples were not to take anything with them. Naked we come into the world and naked we leave it I guess, but throughout life, we depend on other people, I mean you just couldn't live a solitary existence of self-sufficiency. We all need to rely on the Holy Spirit and that means relying on other people, through whom, until Jesus come again, God works. Yes, we pay for many of the services we receive but we also get a great deal for free - love and care for example.

I find the sheep and goats parable (Matthew 25: 31-46) particularly challenging because I don't always live up to it as I should. The question "where were you when I was hungry, naked or in prison". I'm sure most folks will know this passage about the Day of Judgement. I think what Jesus said in today's reading about the 70 not taking anything with them is consistent with that, because He sends His Word out, via the 70, who go out to witness without taking any material means of support - other than the support that some people freely offer them.

And isn't it just a lovely thing? To say "Peace be on this house" when you go into someone's home or saying "Peace be with you" if you meet them in the street.

Offering a blessing like that could open up an opportunity to speak about our Faith. And remember, there's no need to cajole or persuade - our job is to sow the seed. Again, you will all know the parable of the Sower, but maybe you haven't seen the link, because I hadn't - or if I had, I hadn't really thought about it - how Jesus' teachings hang together to form a coherent syllabus... And as it says in our reading, if the seed doesn't take, the Peace will return to you.

And we have to remember to offer Peace to each other too, as part of our personal support for our Christian friends and fellow worshippers. If you are worshipping with others at this moment, take a little time to do that now.

"The Peace of the Lord be with you".

Just as a further aside on the parable of the Sower. You might think, as I did, that living in an agrarian society, the Sower would be a little better at his job! The seed will have been expensive, but there he is, randomly scattering it willy-nilly over rocks, weed beds and even the gravel road he's going along, as well as over the tilled ground. I mean, what a waste! But then you realise that God wants everyone to have a chance to take the seed of His Word on board, even if they don't listen to it. Which is why Jesus sends the 70 out to every nearby village or town - scattering randomly - so as I said just now, if you think about it, Jesus' teachings hang together perfectly.

It does make me wonder if the 70 struggled with the same awkward questions that we do. And I'm guessing that they would have done - even though it doesn't say. "Did you

hear what Mrs Solomons at n° 22 said about all those Syrian immigrants moving into Capernaum?..." Certainly you get the impression that back then the majority of folk had a greater exposure to religion than our society has today, particularly in Israel where the religious authorities ran the politics as well as the Jewish worshipping community. St Paul's letter to the Galatians discusses religious dogma back then...

From Galatians 6: 12-14, part of one of the lectionary readings for today, **¹² Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.¹³ Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh.¹⁴ May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.**

This conflation - and conflict - between politics and religion remains a problem to this day. In places like Afghanistan or Iran it's very clear but just last week we saw it raise its head in the USA with the overturning of *Roe vs Wade* where the Republicans appear to have adopted a 'fundamentalist' Christian position to deny women the right to have an abortion. Religious control of politics existed here in England until the late 17th century. and even now, some three hundred years later, we are still concerned about Northern Ireland, where the religious differences between the Protestant North and the Catholic minority remain at the heart of the matter. We have to deal with these questions.

But all we see when the 70 return is their expressions of joy at being able to overcome evil spirits. Most of the translations I looked at use the word 'joy' but The Voice says they returned 'elated' and The Message says they came back 'triumphant'. Jesus' response in vs 20 **"do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."** gives the impression that there was a hint of pride as well as of joy in the disciples' reaction.

The Message translates Jesus' response to the return of the 70 as follows: **Jesus said, "I know. I saw Satan fall, a bolt of lightning out of the sky. See what I've given you? Safe passage as you walk on snakes and scorpions, and protection from every assault of the Enemy. No one can put a hand on you. All the same, the great triumph is not in your authority over evil, but in God's authority over you and presence with you. Not what you do for God but what God does for you - that's the agenda for rejoicing."**

So let us be aware of human pride because it is God's Word we are teaching and His will we are following. With that thought, may I thank you all, not only for listening this morning, but also for the opportunity you've given me to extend my own learning and to question myself in relation to what we've spoken of here. As St Paul said in Philippians 3:12 **"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."**

Amen

Now we come to our **Prayers of Intercession:**

Father, we bring before You in our prayers all the suffering and hurting people in the world. Help us to better understand their needs that we might support in prayer, word and deed the work of both Governments and Charities around the world to bring hope and opportunity to those living with few resources at home and overseas. Shut the

mouth of injustice that seeks to devour and rob individuals and families of their human rights and what they need not just to survive but to grow and thrive. Teach us to have servants' hearts and to live in humility and gratefulness.

Thy Kingdom come... Thy will be done

Father, we pray for the well-being of our leaders, those who lead and occupy positions of political power, both in our own country and overseas, and that through Your Holy Spirit You will imbue in them the desire, wisdom and understanding to work tirelessly for good, aligning themselves with Your holy will. May they too have servants' hearts offering their lives in love and humility

Thy Kingdom come... Thy will be done

Father, we ask Your blessing upon the people we know whether they be close by or far away. For work colleagues, our friends and neighbours, for our fellow Christians, Ministers and Church Leaders and especially, let's also pray for Fathers, from our heavenly Father God to our own Fathers whether they're our biological parents, or someone we have looked up to because they are Fathers too. In the space that follows, we name them in our hearts...

Thy Kingdom come... Thy will be done

Father, we pray especially for all who are sick or dying. For the bereaved and grieving. We pray for all who are mentally traumatised, some by events many years ago, others more recent. We remember the 72 victims of Grenfell Tower, who died five years ago and those who survived but whose lives remain defined and damaged by the dark shadow of this even now unresolved disaster... We also remember the dead, their families and the surviving veterans from the Falklands war which ended 40 years ago this month. We pray for the victims, the rescuers and the relatives of all those devastated by the earthquake on the Pakistan Afghan border. We pray for those who for whatever reason, are despairing and worried about their situation... homelessness... homes unfit for living... the cost of living... family matters...

Thy Kingdom come... Thy will be done

We pray for children and people, dependent through age or infirmity on others or on public services - and we pray for all those people who deliver help and support them, both the paid and the unpaid.

Thy Kingdom come... Thy will be done

Take a moment in silence to bring to God someone you are concerned for.....

And we pray for ourselves. That we may know that whatever we have done, if we confess it, that we are healed, forgiven and saved.

Thy Kingdom come... Thy will be done Amen

Let's sing our final Hymn, which is about teaching others the truth about Jesus:

Hymn:

Go forth and tell James E Seddon

H&P 770

1. Go forth and tell! O Church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take:
proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord and King,
that all the world His worthy praise may sing.

2. Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;
He will in grace respond to all who call:
how shall they call if they have never heard
the gracious invitation of His word?

3. Go forth and tell! men still in darkness lie;
in wealth or want, in sin they live and die:
give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,
a love like Yours which cares for all mankind.

4. Go forth and tell! the doors are open wide:
share God's good gifts – let no one be denied;
live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,
Your ransomed powers for His sole glory use.

5. Go forth and tell! O church of God, arise!
Go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;
go till all nations His great name adore
and serve Him, Lord and King forevermore

Let's close in Prayer and share the Grace with each other:

Go forward confident in God's Love for you, that He made you and looks on you with pride in His creation when you make the most of each day and all His wonderful gifts.

Go in peace, in the knowledge that each day is yours to spend and enjoy as you will but mindful of the need to help other people as much as you can in all your days ahead.

And so to the Grace, which we share together:

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. **Amen.**