



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Wednesday Healing Mass 27th May 2020

Readings: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8, Luke 10:1-9

So here we are, poised...

The signs of a lifting of some of the lockdown restrictions are on the horizon.

Everyone is waiting to find out what the post Covid world will look like.

And in the church we are poised, waiting in anticipation for the great festival of Pentecost on Sunday. We know our need more than ever of the renewing rush of the Holy Spirit; we know our need to be filled afresh as we begin to emerge, blinking, into the light and imagining a new world, after so much has changed.

So what do the scriptures give us today to help us? They give us the 70.

70 followers of Jesus, sent out to prepare the way for him.

How does Jesus train them for this expedition?

What are the principles behind what they are appointed to do?

Well, firstly, we can be somewhat envious of them!

At a time when no one knows quite what the rules are,

and how far one can use one's instincts in interpreting them,

Jesus is very clear in his directions. Carry no purse (and therefore money), no bag,

sandals, accept hospitality, be stable, cure the sick, share peace, proclaim the

Kingdom. But keep a healthy detachment from those who can't be at peace with you despite your efforts to do so.

It would be wonderful to have to such clear no nonsense guidance.

Well, on reflection, maybe we need not be quite so envious.

The 70 were extraordinarily ill equipped for a journey. They were very vulnerable.

Completely dependent on the kindness and hospitality of strangers.

What an exercise in trust! Is the Holy Spirit calling upon us as the followers of Jesus to be willing to eat with and make friends with strangers when lockdown finishes?

As churches, maybe we should continue the hospitality we have attempted

via computer and phone, both to congregations, and others, after services resume.

The 70 had to travel extremely light. In fact, all they really had were the clothes they stood up in and a companion. But they had the peace and the spirit and the calling of Christ. Maybe during lockdown we have discovered that a simpler life is possible; simpler than the one we had before. Is the Lord asking us to consider whether the clutter of our previous life is really necessary, all the unnecessary travel, meetings, monthly haircuts, restaurants, and stuff, lovely though some of it is? Can we be content with less and be kinder to the environment?

Just as we are envisaging a new kind of life, so too did those 70 herald a new kind of life. Tell people, said Jesus, that the kingdom of God has come near to you. What is this new kingdom? What during these last few months has been of the kingdom? Where have you seen or felt God's spirit at work? Take a moment now to call to mind anything that has been good, of God.

Could you take that into the future?

As Christians, as the Church, we need to learn what the Spirit has been saying to the Churches during this time.

Another aspect of the mission of the 70 was to bring a message of peace and healing; there will be many in our world who will have suffered greatly during these two months and will continue to suffer. As Christians, as bearers of Christ, we share that mission. Bringing peace, curing the sick.

That is a very important part of the mission of St Marylebone; it has continued and will continue.

How can you be part of Christ's mission of peace and healing?

If you want to find out how it went for the 70, read on the rest of Luke Chapter 10. Goodness knows how they felt when they took those first steps out on to the road, barefoot and penniless. But, without giving the game away, I can tell you it went well.

So, here we are poised, just as the 70 were. Without them, we might never have known the message of the gospel. Like them, we may feel hesitant, fearful, confused.

So come Holy Spirit, fill us afresh this Pentecost. Shower upon us the fruits of the spirit. Pour upon us the gifts of the spirit. Make us know and feel that you will help us at this time of transition. Kindle in us the fire of your love, and renew the face of the earth.