

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
03-07-2022
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

2 Kings 5: 1-14	The healing of Naaman
Psalms 30	I cried out to God, and God saved me
Galatians 6: 7-18	You reap what you sow, Only boast in Christ
Luke 10: 1-12, 17-24	Jesus send out the 70, they rejoice in God's power Jesus says, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see."

Introduction

As we listen to Luke's Gospel today, we hear how Jesus sends out seventy of his followers to go before him, to tell others that he is coming, and to announce, "The Kingdom of God has come near to you".

Just as Jesus sent out the seventy, 2000 years ago, Jesus sends us out now. There are of course differences, in what we might be called to do and who we may be required to witness to, but as Christians we are all called to be witnesses.

Today I would like to look at three important aspects of being sent out to witness to the love of God in Jesus. Firstly, we need to have confidence in the Gospel message we carry. Secondly, we need to have a willingness to do it. And, thirdly we need to have joy in doing it.

Confidence

Let's begin by looking at the first aspect I have mentioned, "Confidence in the Gospel". If our lives are to radiate to others with the love of God in Jesus, then we first need to have confidence in who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for us.

Those seventy obviously had confidence in who Jesus was because he personally sent them out, and they went. And this was even before Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus must have been so wonderful to be around. It's hard for us to visualize, I suppose because Jesus lived on this earth so long ago. I can say though, that I have been reminded of this by the recent TV series, "The Chosen". This series really shows the attractiveness of Jesus. It shows how people are drawn to Jesus, and they want to be around Jesus. No doubt those who first met and decided to follow Jesus 2000 years ago, had confidence in wanting to share, the Good News of Jesus with others.

In the reading from Paul's letter to the Galatians today we hear:-

¹⁴ May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!

In this, we see that Paul had confidence that by accepting what Jesus has done for us, we are a new creation. It doesn't matter what the world throws at us, or what we may have done in the past. If we have faith in Jesus, we can be reconciled to God, and know we are secure in God's love, and we will be enabled to deal with whatever comes our way.

In the Old Testament reading today we see the confidence Elisha had, in who God was. In the story from 2 Kings, when the King is stressed because the Aramean King expected his servant Naaman to be cured, Elisha says,

'Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.' Elisha had confidence in God's Providence.

Do we have confidence in what God has done for us?

As Christians, we do not believe in a God who is out there somewhere, but rather, in a God who has made himself known to us physically in the person of Jesus. And a God who comes to live within us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Those first followers of Jesus grew in confidence of who God was, and how they were secure in God's love, after witnessing the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. We are recipients of that same Good News now, and we can have the same confidence that they had.

If we are going to witness to the Good News of Jesus, we must first have confidence in who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for us.

Willingness

Secondly, if we are going to be enabled to show forth the light of Jesus in our lives, we need to have a willingness to do it.

Those first 70 disciples must have been very willing. They went even after Jesus said this to them,

³ Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road."

Even after hearing these rather harsh words, they still went out to tell others about Jesus.

If we are willing, I believe God will provide the ways and means, for us to share God's love with others.

In the Old Testament reading today we hear how Naaman was challenged about being willing to carry out instructions from God's prophet, to wash in the river. It took one of his servants to challenge him about how easy it would actually be to go and wash in the river. When Naaman realized this, he washed and was made clean.

I think if we have a willingness to be open to God's calling on our lives then we may be surprised as to how God will use us.

Joy

And what happened when the seventy returned to Jesus after going out to witness. Luke tells us in Luke 10:17:-

The seventy returned with Joy.

Whilst we cannot see Jesus in the same way they did, we can see, and hear, Jesus come to life in the words of Scripture, and in other followers of Jesus today. And this Joy comes to us because we know we are secure in God Love.

After we hear the Joy of Jesus followers in being able to get rid of demons in Jesus name, we hear Jesus remind his followers (Luke 10:20):-

²⁰ Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'

As Christians, our Joy comes primarily from the knowledge we are forgiven and reconciled to God through Jesus. We should not tie our Joy to external things, like how successful we are at witnessing, which may be beyond our control. This lines up with the advice of Ash Barty's mindset coach, who I heard speaking on TV recently. He talked about measuring our self worth by who we are, rather than by external factors that may be beyond our control, like how much money we may be able to earn, or how well others think of us.

Those first followers of Jesus had a joy in witnessing to who Jesus was, and we get a hint of why in the words from Jesus (Luke 10:23-24):-

²³ Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! ²⁴ For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.'

Conclusion

Often, we hear stories like Jesus sending out the 70 and think that's not me. And in one sense that's ok. We're not all called to be evangelists in the same way.

But God is still calling you to witness. It may be just to those close to you. It may be in the kindness you show to a neighbour, or the friendliness you give to someone having a bad day who is serving you in a shop, or the patience you show to the call centre operator, because the difficulty they are having in providing a service to you it is not necessarily their fault, but rather the system that they are working within.

The love of God is something that we carry within us, and it is something we are called to share. It will be different for all of us, but is something each of us needs to discern within our own lives.

We need to have confidence in the Gospel, we need to be willing, and we need to do it joyfully.

If we have this confidence, willingness and joyfulness, then I believe God will lead us, and make it known to us, as to how God is calling us, to witness to the Good News we have in Jesus.

Jesus said, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.'

May God send us out joyfully into his harvest this week.

Amen.