

Sermon for Trinity+1 Sunday – Following Christ's Mission in Modern Daily Life

From Advent to Pentecost, the Church gives Christians the opportunity to study Christ's 33 years of life on earth, in a chronological and rough seasonal order, compressed into 6 months. It tends to ask, and answer, the question, "Well now, what did Christ do?"

The remaining six months, from Trinity to Advent, gives Christians the opportunity to study themselves; and reflect on how they match up to Christ's expectations of us. This reflective period tends to ask, but not necessarily answer, "Well now, what would Christ have done in my situation?" and/or "Am I doing it right?" and/or "God, can you help me with this bit please?"

From the Exodus reading, it is clear that the rescued Israelites have been diverging from the correct path and God warns them to mend their ways; or end up like the Egyptians. Alternatively, if they do as God commands then they will be exalted on earth. A real no-brainer decision for people who had, until recently, been slaves and definitely not exalted. God's message was more stick than carrot.

The Gospel reading is a real game-changer for the disciples. Up until now, they have been Christ's logistics team. Organising accommodation, fetching donkeys, keeping the crowds at a social distance etc. But now they have been told to lead the newly-formed Christian church and expand it through a global evangelical mission. Unlike Moses, Matthew lists the specific tasks that the disciples have been given by God through Jesus. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and drive out demons. Quite a career change from being fishermen, as most of them had gone back to being, to becoming miracle workers.

However, God never sets us impossible tasks. Sometimes they are hard tasks or uncomfortable tasks, but never impossible ones. He loves us and helps us when we ask for it. Even when He is cross with us, He will still help us. Genesis tells us that God gave Adam and Eve a bearskin to cover their bare skin when they were banished from Eden.

These miracle skills are not something that you can study at Open University while you do your day job. They are divinely given. Freely the disciples were given the ability to do wondrous things and they were told to go out and use them. It is unlikely that any of us today will be given the opportunity to serve God in exactly the same miraculous way that the disciples were required to do. But this does not mean that we should not continue with global evangelical mission using the talents that we do have. The instruction given by Jesus at the Last Supper to "Love one another as I have loved you" is just as relevant today as it was then.

The world today is geographically much larger than the known world of two thousand years ago; and there are certainly more people living there; but this does not mean that we should be daunted in our task of spreading the "Good News" as part of the global mission.

In 1930, a Hungarian named Frigyes Karinthy proposed the theory, called '6 Degrees of Separation', that any two people on the planet can be linked using at most five intermediaries. Modern technology has updated that theory. Statisticians have shown that '4 degrees of Separation' applies to the 2.5 Billion Facebook users and that 4.5 Billion people, about 60% of the world's population, now have access to the internet.

As we embark on a new week, how will you fulfil your commitment to God's mission? Even though we are restricted in our travel it is still possible to spread the Good News, from the safety of your own home. It is not just our duty, it is our reason for being a Christian that we should tell everyone that we can about God's love, His power and His forgiveness for anyone who asks for it. It is for their benefit that Jesus commanded us to do so. Remember, God does not set us impossible tasks, only challenging ones. Amen