

Sunday Worship at Home

Sunday 10th May 2020

Holy Habits Theme: Making More Disciples – The First Disciples

Preparation

Take a moment to sit and be still. Breathe slowly and deeply. Allow God's presence to be felt as you bring yourself closer to him. Remember all those who will be worshipping and praying in their own homes and know that we are together in spirit.

Opening Sentence

**O Lord, open our lips
And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

Opening Prayer

**Lord, direct our thoughts,
Teach us to pray,
Lift up our hearts to worship you
In Spirit and in truth,
Through Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Prayer for the Day

**Gracious God,
You call us to be witnesses and disciples in
this our generation.
Grant us in the gift of your Holy Spirit to
inspire and sustain us as we proclaim the
Gospel message, through Jesus Christ your
Son our Lord who is alive and reigns with
you,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit
One God, now and for ever.
Amen.**

Saying Sorry

In a moment of quiet, hold up to God the thoughts, words and actions that you need ask forgiveness for.

**Heavenly Father, we come to you to ask
forgiveness of our sins and to give thanks
that you love us so much that you give it.
Amen.**

Readings

Acts 7:55-60

⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw God's glory and Jesus standing at the right side of God. ⁵⁶ "Look!" he said. "I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right side of God!"

⁵⁷ With a loud cry the Council members covered their ears with their hands. Then they all rushed at him at once, ⁵⁸ threw him out of the city, and stoned him. The witnesses left their cloaks in the care of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ They kept on stoning Stephen as he called out to the Lord, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" ⁶⁰ He knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord! Do not remember this sin against them!" He said this and died.

John 1:35-51

The First Disciples of Jesus

³⁵ The next day John was standing there again with two of his disciples, ³⁶ when he saw Jesus walking by. "There is the Lamb of God!" he said. ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this and went with Jesus. ³⁸ Jesus turned, saw them following him, and asked, "What are you looking for?" They answered, "Where do you live, Rabbi?" (This word means "Teacher.")

³⁹ "Come and see," he answered. (It was then about four o'clock in the afternoon.) So they went with him and saw where he lived, and spent the rest of that day with him.

⁴⁰ One of them was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ At once he found his brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah." (This word means "Christ.") ⁴² Then he took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "Your name is Simon son of John, but you will be called Cephas." (This is the same as Peter and means "a rock.")

Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come with me!" (⁴⁴ Philip was from Bethsaida, the town where Andrew and Peter lived.) ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one whom Moses wrote about in the book of

the Law and whom the prophets also wrote about. He is Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth.”⁴⁶ “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” answered Philip.

⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, he said about him, “Here is a real Israelite; there is nothing false in him!”⁴⁸ Nathanael asked him, “How do you know me?”

Jesus answered, “I saw you when you were under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

⁴⁹ “Teacher,” answered Nathanael, “you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

⁵⁰ Jesus said, “Do you believe just because I told you I saw you when you were under the fig tree? You will see much greater things than this!”⁵¹ And he said to them, “I am telling you the truth: you will see heaven open and God's angels going up and coming down on the Son of Man.”

Short Reflection by Rev Lis Arnold

(audio recorded by Rev Teresa Townsend)

In the past few weeks, we have learnt more than we would ever want to know about infections/contagious diseases and how they are transmitted. It is a frightening time and calls us to dig deep into our faith to sustain us, to keep us strong and to keep us from the temptation to despair.

In our Gospel reading we see a very different contagion – the contagion of knowing Jesus. We can see quite clearly that this discovery of Jesus is transmitted from person to person. Firstly from John the Baptist who says, “Look, here is the Lamb of God,” and from him to two of his disciples, one of whom was Andrew and then from him to his brother Simon Peter.

Jesus himself finds Philip and Philip finds Nathanael and so the first group of Disciples is called – according to John. Luke tells of a different version.

What is interesting here is the relational aspect of the calling of the first disciples – it is mainly by word of mouth and from person to person. The ‘r’ factor is relational!

Most research into how people come to faith says that it is through other people. Pause for a moment and reflect on how you came to faith. Who were the people who brought you to Jesus? Who inspired or encouraged you on your faith journey? Give thanks for them now.

The Gospel passage is at the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry, the reading from Acts however shows the early church getting organised after the Resurrection.

As the numbers of Christians have grown after the Resurrection so they need to care for one another. We see the beginning of pastoral care and the formal commissioning of people into roles.

Stephen, along with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolaus were all selected to serve as elders/deacons to minister to the increasing church. This seems to have been formalised in that it says the Disciples laid their hands on them as a sign of commissioning.

The cost of discipleship is great sometimes and we have clear evidence in the story of Stephen. Discipleship means following Christ and being Christ to others. Jesus championed the poor, the outcast, the unjustly treated people on the edge of society. This is not always popular. Stephen speaks truth to power when he speaks to the Council and tells them how unjust they had been in crucifying Jesus – of course they are furious to be so challenged and they ‘ground their teeth’ and dragged him out of the city and stoned him to death. Stephen echoes Christ when he says, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”

In our society, we too are called to speak out and to stand against injustice and bigotry. Before the Coronavirus we had Brexit – remember that?? – and the debate during the referendum threw up untold prejudice and bigotry. It is our duty as Christians to stand up and speak truth into unjust situations. Now of course, ironically, the virus has wiped all of that out.

So in our two readings today, we see the calling and the cost of discipleship. We are today’s disciples. We stand in the footsteps of Andrew and Peter and the others as we follow Jesus.

“Come and see,” Jesus says. “Come and see,” they say. So we try – we try to see Jesus in the middle of all this awfulness. St Teresa of Avila said, “Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours.” How very true that is right now. Daily we see Christ at work caring for the sick, for our neighbours, for the vulnerable and ministering with love and care through the hands of others.

Amen.

Hymn: Will you come and follow me

Sing/ Read /Pray /Proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/GiXnbOORTAU?list=RDGiXnbOORTAU>

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 that 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.

John L Bell

Intercessory Prayer

You could use either the Lectio Divina or Prayer Jars (both produced as a page at the end of this service) or follow a preferred model of prayer for yourself.

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
And the glory are yours
Now and for ever.
Amen.**

Closing Prayer for this time we live in

**We are not people of fear: we are people of courage. We are not people who protect our own safety: we are people who protect our neighbours' safety. We are not people of greed: we are people of generosity. We are your people God, giving and loving, wherever we are, whatever it costs
For as long as it takes wherever you call us.**

A Prayer of Blessing

**Eternal God,
Whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life:
Grant us to walk in his way,
To rejoice in his truth,
And to share his risen life:
Who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
Be among us and remain with us always.
Amen.**

**Making More Disciples
Challenge of the Week:
share your faith story by
phone/WhatsApp/email**

MMD Prayer:

Lord, help us to go further than we might expect or feel is comfortable. Help us to share your love in places beyond the safety of the world we know, with people who haven't heard of you. Help us to feel secure in the knowledge that your Holy Spirit will guide us. Amen.

Suggestions for Prayer today & during the week

Lectio Divina

Using the Bible Reading from today's service, we can use the ancient way of praying called Lectio Divina (which means divine reading). It is a simple way of slowing down enough to really hear God. The following instructions are just one way of praying using this method.



1. Be quiet for a few seconds, take a couple of deep breaths. Decide to focus on God for the next few minutes, perhaps close your eyes.
2. Read today's Bible passage to yourself – either aloud or silently.
3. Read it again, slowly.
4. Start listening out for a word or phrase that jumps out to you, something that grabs your attention.
5. Read it one more time, this time decide on one word or phrase.
6. Think about the word/phrase you chose. What does it make you think of? What pictures pop into your head? What does it make you feel?
7. Turn the word into some kind of prayer – does it make you want to say thank you, please, sorry or something else? Say your prayer to God.
8. Just sit quietly for another few seconds.
(taken from engageworship.org)

Prayer Jars

It can be difficult at times to decide on what to pray for. Having something like a prayer jar may help.



You could put slips of paper into the jar over the course of a week, prayers for people or situations, prayers of thanks for answered prayers etc.

During the time of prayer today (and/or during the week), you could take them out (or a few) and spend time focusing on them, offering them up to God's love, mercy and care.

Prayer Stones

The idea for using prayer stones is that they can represent people or situations.



As we are now in the Holy Habit of Making More Disciples, it may be that there is a person in particular who you are praying for to come to know and follow Christ for themselves. Think of people you know and love. Think of people you know about through the news. Is there anyone you can think of whose lives could be transformed by knowing the overwhelming love and grace of God?

Pray for them. Pray for them every day. Pray that they might come to know God's love for themselves. Pray that they might become a disciple of Jesus.

Choose stones, buttons or something colourful that can be kept somewhere as a prayer focus. When you look at the object, remember who or what it represents and offer a prayer to God.

For Children

Make a prayer rainbow using any materials you have at home or have a rainbow hunt and find objects of each colour.

Use your rainbow to pray for...

everyone who is sick
carers and delivery drivers
all those who are special to us
teachers and leaders
everyone working for the NHS
people who are feeling scared or sad
yourself



The Rainbow is a sign of hope, a sign of God's promise. Pray that in this difficult time all people may come to know the love and peace of God.