

Discipleship 8

30/07/17 11:15

(As I preached without notes, this text was not followed exactly, but it contains the main gist of what I said)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19)

We come to the final Sunday in our 8 week sermon series on Discipleship. Together we have been thinking about many different aspects of being and making disciples. We have entitled this series "**Step Out Of The Boat! Being a Disciple in 21st-Century Caversham**", and I know colleagues and I have wanted to help us to see the call on every follower of Jesus Christ is one to courageously step out of the metaphorical boat of our lives. This is the place of familiarity and often comfort. Jesus invites his disciples to follow him, to a place that is unknown and perhaps uncertain. And that is always discomfiting and unsettling. Yet the call to every Christian from their baptism is to embark on a lifetime of journey with God in Christ.

So together we have thought about Jesus invitation to come and see who he is, that our hearts may be set alight. We have thought about our own walk with Jesus, and Penny urged us to 'be' with God, and to not try too hard. We've thought about how being disciples should show in our lives, and we should be different to the ways and standards of our age: counter-cultural. We've reflected on how the call to Jesus followers is often hard and demanding - but Judith reminded us of the need to be ourselves, to be open to grow and change, but as God intends us to. And last week we thought about how disciples are always called to be together and to minister together - Marion reminded us of the centrality of prayer to the life of the disciples and the mission we are called to.

So today our readings turn us to focus on the central call to all disciples - that we live as disciples of Jesus, not for our own sake, but for others that they too might know Jesus. The word 'evangelist' or 'evangelical' have been hijacked over the centuries to define a certain part of the church, or theological position. But there is not getting away from the fact that we are called to be people of the Good News of Jesus Christ - people of the greek word Euangellion, or bringers of good news. Good news is never for us to keep to ourselves.

All three readings today speak to the existing disciples, and personally commission us into action. Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to his followers, so that we might be his witnesses. In a passage perhaps familiar to us, because of its use in PMC year 1, the disciples are called to go to every town where Jesus intended to go - and to go in pairs together to bring peace. And finally, in Jesus final command to the disciples, they are to go and make disciples.

We note those final words:

Go - means to move on a course; to move out; to begin an action. We note that this communion service like all others end with that command "Go in peace", or in the words of the RC Mass "Go the Mass is ended". The Christian is commanded by Jesus not to stay in this place of worship and encounter with God at the Eucharist, but to go into the world transformed by God's Spirit at work in us, that others might know about God. I wonder is we ever stop to think when we receive communion, how is God transforming me today? What can I do now that God is at work in me?

And the command to 'go' from Jesus is quickly followed by the commission to make disciples. Our mission is to be a witness to Christ in the world - in word and in deed. Both are important. People will come to know about Jesus by what we say and how we live. Those of doing the Alpha course last week were helpfully asked to think about how we ended up in church - who told

us? That's true for each one of - someone showed us, someone told us of Jesus. We disciples are the one commissioned to pass on the message. And we can do that by talking to others about our faith; in noticing where we see God and proclaiming this to others; in creating a culture of generous hospitality with those living around us.

I wonder after all these weeks where you have got to in your thinking about your walk with Jesus. Where could your discipleship be leading next? How could you step out of your boat onto the water, as Jesus asks us to? Have you any great ideas, opportunities and resources for action as Jesus' disciples to share?

During this sermon series we have purposely put on extra groups to help grow our faith: some have enjoyed the Alpha group, looking at the various Numa videos, of the Meal with Jesus course. The existing house groups are valued by some, but there is plenty of scope for those groups to welcome new people, and for new groups to start. As we continue to grow our faith, please do seize the opportunities for faith nurture we are putting on. Our Lord calls us to grow in our faith, and to be prepared to respond to his call to follow him, beyond our existing horizons. My prayer is that each of us will give attention our faith, and the faith to reach out to others who don't know Jesus.