

Sermons preached at All Saints Anglican Church of Luxembourg

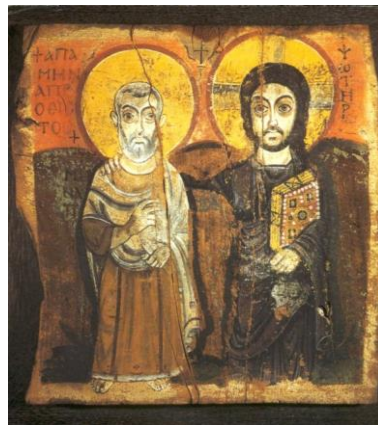
Preached by Rev Geoff Read on Sunday 7th July 2024

Theme: “How the Holy Spirit ...” (3) – empowers us for loving service

Bible texts: Mark 6:1-13, I Corinthians 12:1-13

It was great to be in Brussels last Sunday for Alison’s ordination

Each time a new colleague is ordained, or a friend or a daughter and son-in-law I give them a gift. The same gift. It’s this



An icon. Icons are more than just a picture. It’s a visual prayer. As we contemplate it, with faith, it becomes the meeting place with Jesus

This icon is called Christ and the Abbot of Mena – C8 Egyptian icon showing Jesus standing alongside a Christian leader. It now hangs in the Louvre, Paris.

At Taizé they call it Christ and the disciple

So really its how Jesus stands alongside us in all we do and say – not just as individuals but also as a church

Note how Jesus has his hand on the man’s shoulder – a sign of friendship, reassurance, presence

Jesus holds a book, the gospel. His halo is large and reflected in the smaller one that amazingly this man has too – for he is saint. Not the stained-glass window sort, but the way the Bible says we are all saints in the making, being made more like Jesus day by day

For me its how, as I stand alongside Jesus, He invites me, invites us to join in with what He is doing in the world – giving a reminder of His presence, his direction, authority and His power to join in

That’s what you see in our gospel reading in Mark 6

In v6 we read how Jesus went about among the villages teaching

It continues that He called the dps and sends them out two by two to join in his mission

They are given authority and power to heal, deal with evil and proclaim a message about repenting, inviting others to turn back to Jesus as Lord and finding life

As those first dps do that, anointing with oil, laying on hands, talking about Jesus - people experience that promised change in their lives

Note how what Jesus is doing and what they join in with is about the whole person – body, mind, spirit

It involves authority to act in His name, to teach in His name and what is called in v2 and v5 to do “deeds of power” in His name

It’s the arrival of the Kingdom of God in ways that people can see, touch, and experience

As the dps go, they go two by two – in community, just like Jesus did – one with His Father and the Spirit, and also one with the twelve

As they go, they experience the same welcome and rejection that Jesus does – that’s what either staying in a home or shaking dust off your feet is about

For as they go, they relate deeply to networks of people, just as Jesus does – the homes they are encouraged to stay in, offering this good news through living alongside these networks of people. You could say they incarnate, embody the good news of Jesus just as Jesus Himself does

This is the sort of living with and for Jesus that the icon seeks to portray

In our second reading, as Paul writes to the church in Corinth, he is talking about exactly this same pattern of joining in with Jesus, being part together of the Body of Christ – together with Jesus, together with fellow believers, the two by two of the gospel passage

And the gifts he is talking about are the same Jesus-given authority and power to join in with what Jesus is already doing in the here and now

For example, through that joining in with Jesus, others are invited to reorientate their lives towards Him – “no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit

This holistic, whole life change for those in the world around us comes about through his disciples then and now joining in with what Jesus is already doing through His Holy Spirit in the world and the church

The list of gifts we read in 1 Cor 12 and in other lists in the NT are tools for the job to do this

The word translated here as gift is in Grk. “charis” – expression of grace, what God’s goodness looks like when it touches human lives, the creation

These gifts are tools given to the church and each believer and filled with energy, life and power by the Holy Spirit

Tools given to all believers – READ v7

And this common good is all that Jesus is doing in the here and now to bring a broken, alienated world back to life and relationship with God

So there are gifts that enable his message of life to touch people’s **minds** – the utterance of wisdom and knowledge, prophecy – these are about giving people truth that touches their daily lives, a framework for understanding life in a new way, through God revealing, convincing, convicting

That’s why we offer Alpha

There are gifts through which Jesus enables us to join in what He is doing to touch people’s **bodies** – gifts of miracles and healing (v9), empowered with a particular measure of faith (v9)

And of course, gifts that Jesus uses to touch and heal **spirits** – discernment, healing, setting free from spiritual oppression

When we pray in our intercessions, the Prayers of the People we bring people into the presence of Jesus

But how might power, released through our prayers change some of the things we are so aware of in our own community?

I believe that was something people experienced when we had prayer and anointing on the Sanctuary Day and in the Sunday services – words of knowledge that spoke deeply and personally, a sense of things changing ...

These are the tools for that job, as we stand alongside Jesus in the places where He is and join in the things He is doing, tools that He gives to His church through the Holy Spirit

But they are not just for life in the Church – as the church is scattered Monday to Saturday like those first days, so we take the seeds of the Kingdom into our offices, workplaces, families, schools, communities

Paul is clear that every believer is given at least one gift for this sort of service by the Holy Spirit (v7)

And that it is God, by His Spirit, who activates all of them in everyone (v6)

So the question is:

- Where is Jesus already at work in the places He has put you and me – as our hearts are moved by the pain, confusion, sickness, oppression we see, but also hope and faith that it can change or at least the desire and glimmer that it would?
- how has God equipped All Saints, Luxembourg for loving service in those places with these gifts that release His life-changing power?

Where do you see lives and situations where people are not free – what does that look like?

Pause

What would it look like if the love and power of Jesus touched those situations and the people affected?

Pause

Could it be that as you become aware of these situations, it is Jesus inviting you to join in with what He is already doing?

Often, we become aware of these things through relationships

But we also become aware because we have been given a God given passion and compassion for a cause, a people group, a need – care of creation, racial justice, seeing people in our friendship group find faith in Jesus

What's your passion?

As we connect with that passion, we also need to become aware of the gifts we have been given to fulfil change in Jesus' name

By gifts I don't just mean the natural aptitudes that we begin to offer and yield to Jesus as Lord for Him to use

But also, the supernatural giftings that the Holy Spirit gives – that are listed here and that Paul says each believer is given for the common good

Do you know what that Holy Spirit gift is?

Would you like to?

What could happen if you, if we, begin to live life, to serve out of the place of passion and giftedness rather than just volunteering or effort?

What might that look like in the way you approach your work? Family life? Our church life?

Talk to Fr Martin about the HS gift of generosity some time and see his face light up

Or talk to Marie-Lousie about the passion God has put in her for welcome and community and the HS gift of hospitality she has been given

Do you know what gift the Holy Spirit has given you for the common good?

Would you like to know?!

I believe this is the journey Jesus is leading us on here at All Saints

To be people of passion and compassion

And to be people He is empowering and gifting to join in in a new way with what He is already doing



We plan to have hold the [Shape course](#) at a future date, helping people to understand, identify and use their passion and gifts – let [Geoff](#) know if this is something you would like to be a part of

Would you like sermon texts to be available each week on our website?