

## **Sermons at All Saints Anglican Church of Luxembourg**

**Preached by Rev Geoff Read on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2024**

**Bible text: Mark 6:30-34, 53-end**

Have you had the experience of coming out to your car and finding it covered in sand – like every car in the street

It's not that you have parked too near a building site

It's because the weather pattern has carried sand at high altitude from the Sahara and then dumped it randomly here in Luxembourg. Its highly abrasive and can easily scratch paintwork, windows

The Mishna is a collection the sayings of Rabbis ranging from 200 BC to 200AD. One of the earliest is from Yose ben Yoezer (yo-EHZ-er) about rabbis and their disciples

*Let thy house be a meeting-house for the wise;  
and powder thyself in the dust of their feet;  
and drink their words with thirstiness.*

It was common for young men to choose to follow a rabbi for a period then go to another for more learning

That following was an intensive time for the student or disciple: not just of listening, but of observing, being alongside, sharing in the life of the rabbi

So close, indeed that the saying developed: "May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi ..."

Imagine walking so closely behind someone that the dust that rose up from their feet would coat you

Unlike disciples choosing rabbis, Jesus chose and called His disciples, and they stayed with Him

But the saying remains good – our four gospels give us a picture of what that was like over three intensive years, a closeness that was like being covered in the dust of Jesus

And you see that in our reading today

Having been sent out to join in with all that Jesus is doing in the villages (6:6), performing deeds of power, healing, teaching, we read in v30 that "the apostles (lit. sent ones) gathered around Jesus and told him all they had done and taught (6:30)

There it is – gathered around Jesus

Do you get the picture of pushing in, crowding in

Indeed the invitation then comes for that closeness as he says "Come away" (READ v31)

Why? To rest and to be with Him

The joining in they had done in the villages is about a sharing in His work at His invitation, given His authority and power for that mission

The sense of the grk work "gathering" is about reporting back to the one who has authorised a piece of work, a particular activity

And I think this is really important as we as All Saints grow and deepen our understanding and experience of being Jesus' dps

Yes there is the general sending out to live and serve for Jesus

But its always "in the name of Jesus" which has about it being covered in His dust

In other words: we seek to be so near Him that we can discern what He is doing in a particular situation and we can hear His invitation to join in

Indeed this is how Jesus Himself sees His own work

Early in John's account of these three year(5:19) Jesus says to His dps: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."

That's why Jesus prays. To see, to discern what His Father is doing – so that He can join in

Not every person is healed. Sometimes Jesus moves on from what looks like huge success

Why?

Because He is only doing what he sees His Father doing

Later in John's gospel Jesus speaks about the dust in a different way

He takes another image familiar to his dps, the vine (John 15:4-5)

"Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

He goes on: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love". (v9)

And here is the heart of this being so close you get dusty, this gathering around, this abiding

It much more than obedience or accessing power to make a difference in the world

It's a way of experiencing and expressing the love of Jesus – a love that always overflows to others

The self-same love between the Father and the Son is the invitation from Jesus to us

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love" (v9).

And so just as wonderfully as that happens between Father and Son through the Holy Spirit, so that is how it is possible between us and Jesus

It's the Spirit Who takes our desire for God and also our distractions, our best for Him and our worst without Him, all that we are happy for Him to see and all of which we are ashamed

The Spirit takes all of that to the cross – where the costly love and power of Good Friday and Easter day transforms and invites us to move from our effort and into God's grace

That's what joining in with Jesus is all about: participation in God's grace

Hear that in the invitation of Jesus to his dps: Come away and rest

Hear it also in His response to the pressing need of the crowd who are like sheep without a shepherd – unprotected, unprovided for - and so on who He has compassion and He begins to teach them many things

Yes there will be time for feeding – our reading leap frogs the feeding of the 5000

Yes there will be time for healing – we see that in the original call and then at the end of our passage

But for now what is crucial is a feeding on and from the words of Jesus – words that bring protection and that feed like a Good Shepherd – words that bring life

Hear that invitation to gathering, to abiding, to being near Jesus even when it leads the disciples into apparent danger as a result

The way our reading is selected it also leap frogs the way Jesus sends the disciples away for that rest by telling them to get in a boat to go to another place for rest (v45)

As He dismisses the crowd He goes up a mountain to do what – to pray, to be with His Father, get His perspective (v46)

It is as a result of their obedience, their joining in, that they find themselves in danger from a storm

But He comes to them, amazingly walks on water. He gathers them, He is so close to them they could get splashed with water rather than dust

“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid” (v50)

In fact what we read is that what happens to their hearts is this: “their hearts were hardened” (v52)

But Jesus doesn't give up on them

Even if they will wander and resist, be confused and doubting, He remains committed, intentional on being close to them

Learning this intimate dependence is hard – it takes a lifetime of following, being a disciple of Jesus.

And it begins and is maintained as we heed His call each day to follow Him, to “gather around Jesus and tell Him all that we are doing”

May we be covered in the dust of our rabbi, Jesus