

ORDINARY TWO **Rev Jo White**

Sunday 14th June 2020 YEAR A

Genesis 18:1-15; Psalm 116:1-2, 11-12; Romans 5:1-11; Matthew 9:35- 10:8

This is a such special thing for me to be preaching in our cathedral and I thank Dean Susannah for this opportunity.

This week there seems to be a sense of newness and freshness as some of our churches have commenced worship again, at least in a restricted format, and there is a sense of newness and freshness as we enter Ordinary time; what has also be called the season After Pentecost or simply green-time. As a church leader I like the chance to put on the green because it marks a period in our church life where there are less big festival and less community events with more time to reflect, to plan and to grow in our faith. This greenness is a little reminder that growing, like the simple blades of grass, is what we are doing as Disciples of Christ. It's a comfort to be in Ordinary time and it's a comfort to be getting back into Matthew's gospel after those fifty days of Easter and the Feast of Pentecost and Trinity.

Even if we have been living a Christian life for a long time we still have things to learn and parts of who we are that can grow and change. We are to be imitators of Christ, living as he did, serving others as he did. What we notice as we read Matthew's gospel today is firstly a summary of Jesus' many tasks and then in chapter 10 a similar set of tasks for the disciples.

At the heart of today's message is Jesus' call to action.

The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few.
(Matt 9:37)

Perhaps the most prominent thing we notice about Jesus here is that he is filled with compassion and this compassion sends him out into cities and villages. His task is varied – he is

- 1) teaching,
- 2) proclaiming the good news and
- 3) curing every disease and every sickness.

I am struck again at the totality of Jesus' work/ministry. He doesn't pick and choose; he cures **every** disease and **every** sickness. I guess that means he cures sicknesses that are non-medical as well as those we might understand as illness of the mind or the heart.

And finally, by implication,

- 4) Jesus cares for and provides the leadership and protection of a shepherd for these people who are 'harassed and helpless like

sheep without a shepherd.' (Matt. 9:36)

Jesus does all that and then he says to the disciples: (animation)

The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few.

(Matt 9:37)

How does Jesus say these words?

Jesus often gets portrayed as gentle Jesus meek and mild but perhaps this time he was a bit exasperated with the inactivity and procrastination of his disciples. Perhaps he was sick of them saying they couldn't and they didn't know how. Perhaps he was sick of hearing them blame each other and sick of hearing them make excuses.

If we were to take Jesus' words on our own lips how would we say them?

The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few.

(Matt 9:37)

Perhaps we have quoted this scripture in an attempt to get more people to do the jobs that need doing; or used it as an excuse to explain why there is little or nothing happening in our church, no new people, no evangelism, no caring or mission or healing or teaching or proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ because the harvest is plentiful but we don't have anyone to bring it in.

Just as we are contemplating what this might mean for us Jesus does the big thing, the best thing for his disciples – he gives them authority and he draws them together with a common purpose - to cast out unclean spirits and cure every disease and every sickness. (10:1) This was just step one for the disciples.

Their ministry was set to grow and change and develop as they followed Jesus and were empowered by the Holy Spirit. These are the very things we hope for ourselves as Jesus' disciples today; that we will grow and change and labour happily, willing and devotedly for the Lord of the harvest.

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The twelve were just ordinary men; ordinary just like us; some of them were fishermen, some were what we might call political, others were scholars and administrators and one was even a tax collector. In these men we see weakness, doubt, hot headedness, fear and insecurity. And who among us cannot identify with such things?

Living as a disciple of Christ, living as a good example of

faithfulness to the call of Jesus doesn't mean we have to be perfect. We can just be ordinary like those disciples. They were not perfect but they did commit themselves to the way of Jesus. To be a follower of Jesus, to be a Christian doesn't mean we have to be perfect but it does mean we must try to be good.

At the school gate children are farewell by their parents with a parting word and if we could listen in we would probably hear things like;

Don't forget your lunch.

I love you.

Have a great day.

And among all these parting words we will probably hear this:

Be good.

To be good is not as simple as it sounds and perhaps as children we thought it just meant don't be bad, don't break the rules, don't get into trouble.

As we grow and mature we come to realise that to be a good person; to be a good Christian is demanding; it requires focused effort and self-reflection.

If we are to be a good Christian (not a perfect one) then there are many challenges and areas of growth ahead. Here are just a few to ponder -

- 1) Follow Jesus' example – Jesus does not confine himself to one arena. He went about **all** the cities and villages. We might understand this in terms of our own influence. We should not confine it just to our church rather we should try to take the message (the good news) with us wherever we are in whatever situation we find ourselves – in school, in the coffee shop, the footy club, the office, the car park, everywhere and anywhere really.
- 2) Similarly we are to find ways to help those who are sick. This means helping the medically unwell but also those who need healing in a spiritual sense. Whatever form healing takes its purpose is to restore people to wholeness; to awaken them to life in all its fullness.
- 3) Good Christians take the time to read and reflect on scripture. Reading and reflecting on scripture together enriches our Christian life. We need this for ourselves but we

also need it in our tool kit so that we can more effectively proclaim the good news.

- 4) Another important habit for Christians is to set aside time for meaningful prayer. It is prayer that draws us deeper and deeper into a relationship with God. Without prayer we are largely powerless. God wants us to share our lives with him and God wants to share his life with us. Prayer is at the heart of our relationship with God.
- 5) Finally we are called upon to help others and make that visible – those of us who volunteer or belong to service clubs can be confident that here we are following Jesus example of service and love.

At the beginning of this ordinary time; this season of 'Growing in Faith' let's hold before us the example of Jesus and [in our ordinariness] try to be good Christians because the harvest is plentiful.

Let us pray.

God of our every day, we pray that you will remind us daily of your Son Jesus' call to discipleship.

We pray that we will never underestimate our place in the work of your kingdom; remind us that we are yours and that you are always with us.

As your good and faithful people we commit ourselves again to serve you in our daily lives and to offer you our prayer, our time, our very selves.

Amen

A GOOD CHRISTIAN

- Follow Jesus' example
- Help those who are sick
- Acknowledge our faults and seek forgiveness
- Take time to read and reflect on scripture
- Set aside time for meaningful prayer
- Allow God to change us
- Spend time with others in Christian fellowship
- Practice what we preach
- Help others and make that visible