

Sermon – June 14, 2020 – St James, Moncton

Matthew 9:35 - 10:23

³⁵Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

¹⁰Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ ⁸Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. ⁹Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. ¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹²As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

¹⁶“See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹Brother will

betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ²²and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Sermon

I am going to talk to you about today's Gospel from Matthew.

Jesus went to the cities and villages, teaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. Didn't that show he wanted to make things better for people?...it was good news and healing he brought. He had compassion for the crowds. Compassion means he suffered with them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Compassion is a strong word...he was deeply affected by the people's helplessness.

So he gathers his twelve disciples and gives them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. Today we understand 'unclean spirits' as mental illness. He enabled and empowered his disciples to do his work. He knew there was so much to do. He tells them to ⁸Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.

They are to be travelers, itinerants, so he gives them instructions how to do it. They are not accustomed to moving as 'unknowns' from place to place. He is straight with them. It won't be easy. But despite that...they are to travel light...no extras, money, tunics, sandals. Just go more or less as you are...that involves some trust that what is needed will be provided. Be prepared that some places will not be welcoming. Be capable of shaking the dust from your feet and moving on. He says they will be like sheep in the midst of wolves; so to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Ooooo! Not exactly an easy picture.

These words are words for us today. We have the same mandate the disciples had – that is to make the world a better place. Maybe we don't think of ourselves as

casting out demons, but we are here to promote wholeness and healing always. Especially now such injustices are being brought to light in individuals and whole systems... These days people by the thousands are saying 'no' this must stop. We are part of the light. Even in the face of deadly viruses, we are part of the light.

I saw a headline this week. It said:

Protests over racism, police violence resonate for Meghan Markle.

A few days ago, Meghan, whose mother is Black and father is white, delivered a virtual address to students at her former school in L.A.

She remembers living in Los Angeles at the time of the 1992 riots — a culmination of years of racial tensions and anger at police brutality — when she was 11 or 12 years old. She saw the looting and “men in the back of a van holding guns and rifles,” and remembers ash falling from the sky and driving home to find the tree outside her house completely charred.

That unrest came to mind for Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, as she watched the protests and riots across the U.S. sparked by the death of George Floyd, a Black man killed at the hands of police in Minneapolis on May 25.

“I can’t imagine that at 17 or 18 years old, which is how old you are now, that you would have to have a different version of that same type of experience,” she said as she shared her sadness about the persistence of racism across the U.S.

“So the first thing I want to say to you is that I’m sorry. I’m so sorry that you have to grow up in a world where this is still present.”

She also said that she had wrestled with the question of what to say to the students at Immaculate Heart High School, given the days of protest that have followed Floyd’s death last month.

“I wanted to say the right thing and I was really nervous that I wouldn’t, or that it would get picked apart, and I realized the only wrong thing to say is to say

nothing,” Meghan said in the graduation address.

Along with Floyd, Meghan mentioned other Black people killed by police.

“Because George Floyd’s life mattered and Breonna Taylor’s life mattered and Philando Castile’s life mattered and Tamir Rice’s life mattered.”

Meghan ended her address with words of encouragement for the students, telling them they are going to lead with love and compassion, and use their voices.

“You are going to have empathy for those who don’t see the world through the same lens that you do, because with as diverse and vibrant and open-minded as I know the teachings at Immaculate Heart are, I know you know that Black lives matter.”

Meghan's found her voice and courageously spoke out despite her fear she would not say the right thing. Her message was retweeted by the Queen's Commonwealth Trust, of which she is vice-president and Harry is president.

the trust tweeted.

"Silence is not an option."

May we also be courageous as our Lord’s ‘sent’ people.

So I think we have a tool to help us in a world that is not always kind and hospitable. That tool is some of our most beloved songs or children's hymns.

Later, Grace and Ben will play 'Jesus Loves Me This I know'. Some have changed the chorus to 'Yes Jesus loves US' Yes Jesus Loves us.