

**TAKE TIME OUT –** *Pastoral Retreat*

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**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March – 4<sup>th</sup>** before Easter:

**Luke 10:1-24** *Jesus appoints seventy and sends them out in pairs*

...<sup>2</sup>He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest. <sup>3</sup>Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ...whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ <sup>6</sup>And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. ...<sup>8</sup>Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup>Cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The Kingdom of God has come near you.’ <sup>10</sup>But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into the streets and say, <sup>11</sup>Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this; the Kingdom of God has come near. ...<sup>16</sup>Whoever listens to you listens to Me, and whoever rejects you rejects Me, and whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.” <sup>17</sup>The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in Your name even the demons submit to us!” <sup>18</sup>He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. <sup>19</sup>See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. <sup>20</sup>Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” ... <sup>23</sup>Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! <sup>24</sup>For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.”

**Luke 10:25-37** *The good Samaritan*

<sup>25</sup>Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ <sup>26</sup>He said to him, “What is written in the Law? What do you read there?” <sup>27</sup>He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’ <sup>28</sup>And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’ <sup>29</sup>But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ ...<sup>36</sup>Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” <sup>37</sup>He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

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**Reflection:**

I have referenced a long passage of Scripture as well as the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is too long to include it all here. Please take time to read it all if you can, because I want to put this very well-known parable in context. This parable is the conclusion to those chosen by Jesus and sent out to continue His work among us. The pre-story is often overlooked but is just as relevant to anyone wanting to follow in His footsteps today. Jesus has already sent out the twelve disciples with power and authority, now He appoints and sends out seventy more into the ‘harvest’ as ‘labourers’. These seventy are sent out in the same way with the same instructions. Basically, they are to go as they are and rely on the Holy Spirit to provide all they need. Wherever they receive a welcome they are to bless and heal, wherever they do not they are to leave with a public declaration of protest against their rejection. *Where do we find a welcome and do we give them a blessing in return? Where do we not find a welcome and do we publicly declare our protest against those who reject the Word of God?*

When we come up against resistance or rejection for promoting the Kingdom of God, we are challenged to remove ourselves from it. This does not mean quietly creep away without a

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response, but publicly declare why. Jesus says that rejecting His followers is the same as rejecting both Him and His Father, and those who do will suffer the consequences. This is not about differences of opinion, these will always occur and we need to engage in healthy debate to resolve them in deference to the Word of God and example of Jesus. This is all about revealing or supressing the good news of salvation. It is not for anyone to decide whether someone should hear the Word of God or not. Those who seek to follow Jesus are commissioned to teach, nurture, and proclaim it to whomsoever we meet. Those who try to stop God's Word being spoken are quenching the Spirit and will come under judgement. *Are we experiencing challenge in our service to God? If not, it may be time to examine our witness- is it for Jesus or popularity? Are we part of the problem or the cure?*

These seventy, like the twelve, did not compromise their commission and return reporting amazing success in healings, deliverances and all manner of miracles. Jesus rejoices in the work of the Spirit manifest through them and recounts a vision given to Him while they were out ministering. Jesus sees Satan falling from grace while those sent out to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit are feared by demons and untouched by any evil design. All this is by God's design and Jesus prays to His Father in thankfulness. We should be encouraged by this reminder that what God has ordained will come to pass and nothing can stop it. By faithfully going and doing what Jesus has commissioned His chosen to do, even Satan is ousted from any power over them. The spiritual battle is fought and won not by our own strength, knowledge, wealth or status, but by our obedience to God through His Son Jesus Christ. By faith we are sent out 'like lambs into the midst of wolves'; by faith we are given eyes to see and ears to hear. This is a warning to discern those who are not given spiritual eyes and ears because Satan does not give up easily and God hides knowledge from hearts that are against His Son. *How often do we ask God for discernment? When we believe we have been given leading from the Lord how often do we ask Him for confirmation? Jesus advises us to test the spirits, do we follow His wisdom?*

In the midst of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, displayed through the seventy and the twelve and Jesus, a lawyer seeks to undermine the authority of Jesus and manifestation of God's power. Where God moves in power, there Satan will be also. The lawyer uses Jewish law to trip Him up and Jesus typically refers the question back to him. He agrees with the lawyers understanding of the law, without answering the intended question concerning 'eternal life'. But the lawyer is slighted and seeks to gain the result he wants by asking another question that Jewish law cannot definitively answer. Again, Jesus does not give an answer but responds instead with a parable. In this instance an innocent victim of crime, a Priest and a Levite, both considered to be pure, and a Samaritan considered impure under Jewish law. To love ones neighbour as oneself means to treat others as you would like to be treated yourself. If you were the innocent victim of crime and left injured, whether physically, psychologically or spiritually, it follows that you would like someone to come to your aid and not leave you suffering and possibly facing death. *But what if that person was someone you were prejudiced against, someone who didn't look like you, live like you, dress like you or eat the same kind of food?*

This is the challenge of Jesus' reply to a heart that was looking to find fault. The lawyer was completely undone; he could do nothing else but admit the Samaritan was the one who behaved according to the command to love your neighbour. The Jewish priest and Levite, who professed to keep the law, crossed the road, turned a blind eye, and left an innocent victim for dead. The one the lawyer's heart was prejudiced against, the one who didn't live

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like him or keep Jewish laws, was the one who did the right thing by God. It is so easy to profess what's right yet do what's wrong; we are all guilty of hypocrisy from time to time. The question to ask ourselves is whether it is pre-meditated or innocently done, prejudice or mistake. We know for sure that God loves a repentant sinner and there is no need to fear His presence or His eye upon us. The context in which this parable is set reveals a deeper, stronger message than it may suggest taken on its own. This whole block of Scripture asks some very searching questions of us. *What attitudes do we hold? What motivates our behaviour? How mindful are we of the influence of evil, both in our lives and within the body of Christ?* May the Spirit of God bless us with eyes to see and ears to hear. **Amen!**

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**Hymn/Song: When I Needed a Neighbour...were you there? JP 275**

When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there?

When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

*Chorus:...And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, Were you there?*

I was hungry and thirsty,

Were you there, were you there?

I was hungry and thirsty, were you there? *Chorus:...*

I was cold, I was naked,

Were you there, were you there?

I was cold, I was naked, were you there? *Chorus:...*

When I needed a shelter,

Were you there, were you there?

When I needed a shelter, were you there? *Chorus:...*

When I needed a healer,

Were you there, were you there?

When I needed a healer, were you there? *Chorus:...*

Wherever you travel,

I'll be there, I'll be there.

Wherever you travel, I'll be there. *Chorus:...*

**When I needed a neighbour, were you there?**

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**Poem: FAMILY VALUES** ©Janice Morgan-1996 - Based on Romans chapter 12

The family of God is a family of need,  
Who on troubles, traumas and trials must feed,  
Daily this life causes boils full of pain to appear,  
And cost of the treatment is priced very dear,  
But prevention they say is far better than cure,  
For that we must study God's Word, to be sure!

This life's values and customs must be thrown away,  
Our ideals must be changed to live life Jesus' way,  
Transformed into thinking of others above ourselves,  
Knowing God, into every deed and thought delves,  
With honest appraisal, judge soberly with great care,  
Lest our lives, against others, will much worse fare.

God has made each one different and yet all the same,  
Our gifts to be used for the other ones claim,  
On our own we are crippled and blind, not fully grown,

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Together God's Kingdom to us will be known,  
So give thought to God's family, for God loves us all,  
Understanding and patience is our high call.

Let us each bless the other with what each has received,  
Then blessings unnumbered we all will conceive,  
Of prophecy and teaching encouragement and grace,  
Tolerance, forgiveness, these gifts ALL, must face,  
With love for each other communication is good,  
Building trust in each other as True love should.

So respect family members for each are unique,  
God made us and loves us and will to each speak,  
Not to all in the same way, or with words all the same,  
But to each as each needs to light the True flame  
Of God's Spirit within us, Who affects our new birth,  
Through us Jesus' teaching will fill the whole earth.

Let's love one another for love is God's special key,  
That opens the door and sets all people free,  
Resolve to be humble, sincere and holy in all,  
To evil and vengeance we must never fall,  
For the master deceiver lies in wait to destroy,  
While our Father protects, exposing the ploy.

Be steadfast and patient through suffering and sorrow,  
God will set things straight with hope for tomorrow,  
If we serve the Lord freely being constant in prayer,  
Others will come to God's family to share  
The harmony and healing tranquillity of peace,  
Till through us, God's children, the world's strivings cease.

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***Prayer:***

Father of all creation and life; help us to be mindful of our responsibility of stewardship over all you have made. Jesus Christ, Lord of God's Kingdom and head of Your Church, help us to be mindful of each other and serve as we would like to be served. Spirit of God most holy, help us to be mindful of evil and discerning of its trickery, within ourselves as in others. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, help us to remain faithful and keep us right with Your Word and Your will, for Your glory. **Amen!**

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