

TAKE TIME OUT – *Pastoral Retreat*

Half Acre, Horton Heath, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 7JS
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Sunday Scriptures: 10th October 2021

Scriptures: NRSV

Isaiah 14:12-20 *Satan cast out of heaven*

¹²How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid nations low! ¹³You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of Zaphon; ¹⁴I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the most high." ¹⁵But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the pit. ¹⁶Those who see you will stare at you, and ponder over you: "Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook the kingdoms, ¹⁷who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who would not let his prisoners go home?" ¹⁸All the kings of the nation's lie in glory, each in his own tomb; ¹⁹but you are cast out, away from your grave, like loathsome carrion, clothed with the dead, those pierced by the sword, who go down to the stones of the pit, like a corpse trampled underfoot. ²⁰You will not be joined with them in burial, because you have destroyed your land, you have killed your people. May the descendants of evildoers nevermore be named!

Luke 10:1-20 *The people of God anointed, equipped and sent out.*

¹After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of Him in pairs to every town and place where He Himself intended to go. ²He 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. ³Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' ⁶And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹Cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near you.' ¹⁰But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into the streets and say, ¹¹Even 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. ¹²I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town. ¹³"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But at the judgement it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades. ¹⁶Whoever listens to you listens to Me, and whoever rejects you rejects Me, and whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me." ¹⁷The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in Your name even the demons submit to us!" ¹⁸He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. ¹⁹See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. ²⁰Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Reflection: Appointed, Equipped to Serve, and Sent out to Witness.

Appointed:...

What does it mean to be appointed? It is a doing word, therefore being 'appointed' means being commissioned to carry out some kind of assignment. This requires both obedience and effort from those appointed with an expectation from the one commissioning to receive a return on completion of the assignment. Far more than the twelve disciples followed Jesus. Those who followed Him were not unique, held no superior status or qualifications, and did

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not have any particular abilities in teaching. Out of these ordinary folk Jesus appoints seventy to go ahead of Him into the towns and villages. The number appointed probably corresponds to the 70 elders chosen by Moses from the 12 tribes of Israel. This would be representative of equality, balance and wholeness among the people of God. It is significant that Jesus does not send them out alone; each of those appointed were paired with a like-minded companion and co-worker for support, protection and encouragement. What equipped them for this mission was their trust in Jesus, an awareness of His power, and their commitment to be faithful to His teaching. Their purpose and mission was clearly defined; to bring peace, cure the sick, and declare that the Kingdom of God is near, and they set out in faith to achieve it. When we have a personal relationship with God through Jesus, we too will experience the presence and power of the Lord and gain a clear vision of what we are called to do in the world. Those the Lord appoints He also blesses with gifts, ability and specific tools to carry out the tasks He commissions. Jesus emphasises the need for constant prayer, which is essential to maintain a right relationship with God. Prayer is also essential for discerning where, what, and when we are anointed to go out and do. Being anointed for mission also means actively seeking ways to get involved. We are not anointed to sit back and leave the work to others but to bring in the Lord's harvest. The harvest is the long-promised gathering of Israel, which is no longer limited to the Jewish nation alone. When the curtain in the temple was torn in two this promise was given to all who believe through the work of Jesus Christ. We are told to ask God for more workers, because the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. Many profess to believe and follow but all too few are prepared to work in the field through all seasons and in all weathers to sow the seeds of faith in the soil of the world. When Jesus returns, He expects to reap the harvest of the seeds His anointed have sown. *What might we have been appointed to do for God? Are we aware of the presence and power of Jesus Christ? Have we been given a clear vision?*

Equipped to Serve...

What does it mean to be equipped to serve? When Jesus sends 'out' those He appoints, He does not suggest a holy huddle with people we know, like and trust. What Jesus requires is going 'out' to serve people we don't know and perhaps don't like or trust and to do so in His name. Mission and evangelism will not necessarily receive an immediate response to the Word of God from those as yet unsaved. Those 'sent forth' were warned that not everyone would believe or agree with their message and they would undoubtedly meet with opposition. We too are sent into a corrupt world and must walk by faith, which is another 'doing' word, only realised through action. We are equipped to serve with the Armour of God and the only piece of armour we are given to fight with is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, which is Truth ([Ephesians 6](#)). Jesus commissions those He appoints to serve Truth in a corrupt and fallen world in order that others may learn about Jesus and through Him come to know God. This will more than likely take us out of our comfort zone and Jesus is not exactly encouraging! 'Lambs in the midst of wolves' is not an inviting image to contemplate! If you know anything at all about lambs, you will understand that they are completely vulnerable with no means of protecting themselves. If you know anything at all about wolves, you will understand that they work in packs, surrounding and biting at their prey to weaken and trap it for the kill. *Has anyone here fallen foul of gossip or experienced opposition?* Clearly, anyone sent out to serve, including ourselves, must not expect an easy time! Furthermore, those sent out to serve are instructed to take nothing with them! That means those appointed must go into threatening circumstances and vulnerable situations without any human means of

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protection, not even a comfort blanket! Choosing to follow Jesus does not guarantee an easy path or trouble free life; it is a walk of faith that requires trust and faithfulness against all odds. However, when we know the Lord we also know that we are never alone. Those appointed are sent to face the enemy of Christ in faith, equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit within, the Lord alongside and the grace of God to guide. This is our survival kit. *What do we have in our faith survival kit? Are we putting on the armour of God each day? Do we trust the Lord to be with us?*

Jesus gives specific instructions for engaging with other people: when entering any household we are to bless it by saying, “Peace to this house!” This is an official greeting from the time of King David and we are reassured that if any do not receive our peace, it will return to us. Jesus also instructs us to make a public statement of rebuke whenever we are not made welcome and remind them that God is an all-seeing and all-knowing presence among us. *Has anyone actually done these things; given a blessing or shaken off the dust? Wolves are prowling in ever decreasing circles to trap and devour those sent out to serve. We ‘go out into the world’ trusting that we will be protected and provided for, because we are in the service of the Lord. We are asked not only to stand in faith for Christ Jesus but also to support other lambs along the way. Some can offer physical provision, others enlighten with spiritual teaching, and still others provide peace and healing. Hospitality is a gift and anointing as much as any other and should be valued, given and received with generosity. All we have must be used in the service of God’s people to support and build the body of Christ on earth. The more we give the greater the blessing God can provide. Jesus instructs us to remain with those who receive our peace and accept all they provide, blessing those who give us protection, nurture and a safe place to rest. How are we using our gifts? What seeds are we sowing in the field God has sent us to work in? Who might we need to support?*

Sent out to Witness:...

What does it mean to be sent out to witness? We are told that God is watching what we do, hearing what we say, searching our souls for Truth and judging our hearts. Let us not forget that the world is also watching us and by our behaviour they will judge the whole people of God! The Word of God is the one thing that is constant in a world of shifting sand. A witness declares a testimony of what they know to be Truth but we can neither witness something nor declare what we have witnessed in isolation. As well as making a stand for what we believe, we must demonstrate the righteousness of God on earth, for all will be accountable at the harvest. The Gospel Truth about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit must first be understood before we can declare it to others. God is not deceived by clever speech, plots and schemes; these are the tricks of Satan! We too are warned not to be deceived but to listen to Jesus and follow His example for all to see. Jesus warns us to remain faithful to the Word of God or we will suffer worse than the people of Sodom. Jesus came to heal the brokenness of our body, mind and spirit and bless us with peace. To receive peace we must first take peace out from the place of our nurture and comfort into the spiritual battlefield of the unbelieving. We must work in the field of God’s Kingdom not wondering who else is with us or comparing how others do their work. When Peter was concerned about the mission of another, Jesus rebuked him saying, “What is that to you? Follow Me!” (John 21:20-23). We are to be prepared for the worst and hope for the best by keeping ourselves right with God in the tasks He has called us to perform. We are to be God-dependent, not self-reliant. Jesus has shown us how by His example and warned us of the challenges we face, within ourselves and without. If we are to

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discern the hearts of others we must first test our own: Be sure that what you do is done for God and not yourself. Be sure that what you say is said for God and not yourself. Be sure that what you ask in prayer is for God's Kingdom and not your own. *Do we declare Truth? Are we making a stand for what we believe despite the shifting sand? Is our witness faithful in demonstrating righteousness and peace?*

God loves us so much that we have been given the peace of the Lord, which passes all understanding, and we must share it generously, whether it is received or returned. Jesus has appointed us, equipped us for service and sent us out to witness as labourers in the fields of God's Kingdom. We must go as lambs into the midst of wolves to do only what God has called us to do and trusting that He will protect, equip and guide us to complete our mission. Faith gives us victory, no matter what Satan throws in our way to deter us from our service. As the people of God may every day be a God-dependent day, for His Kingdom and His glory.
Amen!

Hymn/Song: For I'm Building A People of Power [MP 151](#)

For I'm Building a people of power,
And I'm making a people of praise,
That will move through this land by My Spirit,
And will glorify My precious name.
Build Your Church Lord, make us strong Lord,
Join our hearts Lord, through Your Son;
Make us one Lord, in Your body,
In the Kingdom of Your Son.

Poem: A Heart for God ©Janice Morgan 2012

A heart for God that wavers not to study His Commands,
A mind that seeks to do God's Will whatever life's demands,
A soul that searches for the Truth no matter what the cost,
A life that demonstrates God's law to find that which was lost,
If I should have a heart like this my mind would do God's will,
If I should have a soul like this my life God would fulfil.
Please God I pray,
make me this day,
to study what You say
and always walk Your way.

Prayer: Father God, Creator of all things both seen and unseen, help us to be true to our appointed tasks; Lord Jesus Christ, equip us to serve according to Your example; Holy Spirit, come with us and be within us as we go out to witness Truth in a world of shifting sand.
Amen!