

November 2018 Take home sheet for morning church.

This month we have been continuing our look at what Luke's gospel can teach us about discipleship: about how Jesus attracted and trained his disciples, and about what it means for us to be modern disciples.

Luke 8:4-15 The parable of the sower.

Now that Jesus is training his disciples, they need to know about the various reactions that there will be to Jesus' message which they have accepted so happily. Some people will be hard-hearted, some will be shallow in their grasp of it, and some will let the daily cares of life stifle the message of God's kingdom. But Jesus' disciples, while aware that any of them could have any of these reactions, are told that their job is to bear fruit. We are to allow God's word to grow in us and bear a harvest of good for the world.

Luke 9:1-6, 10-11

Jesus sends out his twelve disciples to do the work he has been doing. They are to do what they have seen him do. And they are given the luxury of not taking any baggage with them. They do not have time to worry and think about the what ifs that so often paralyse us. They are told that they have power over evil and to heal – so they are to bring good to people. And as they bring good, they are to proclaim the Kingdom of God – tell people that this is what it means for God to reign on earth.

And they are also told what to do when no one wants to know – it will not all be easy. They are not to keep pushing at firmly shut doors, keep talking to people who don't want to know. Sometimes we have to move on and find the people who do want to know about God's love – they are out there. The challenge to us is to go. To do the good and tell that this is God's love, and let what happens next, how people react, be God's business. We successfully fulfil the remit of disciples when we go.

Luke 10:1-20

Another sending out: this time Jesus sent seventy-odd of his disciples out: newsflash – this discipleship is not just for the few. This time we are told that they went in pairs, which is reassuring, because for most of us being asked to do something alone is far more worrying than doing it with someone else. They still had no baggage to carry – they could leave all their concerns behind, trusting God to provide for them. And they are warned that they go as lambs among wolves, which is not a reassuring picture. We should never forget that we follow Jesus who was the lamb of God.

This time we are told that they came back elated – it is energising and exhilarating when we do God's work and they were buzzing with it. Jesus shared their excitement, but his final word on this subject was to remind them – and us – that while doing God's work can be the most exciting thing in the world, yet even better is the knowledge that our names are written in heaven!

Luke 11:1-13

The disciples make the deceptively tricky request: teach us to pray. Jesus gives them the outline of prayer, which the church from early times has turned into a prayer to say by rote. But when we think of it more as a template, we see that the elements of prayer are:

Intimacy: God is to be approached as a beloved Father.

Reverence: we may be intimate, but we are not familiar. God is God.

Context: Your kingdom come reminds us of what God is about, and we set our prayers in that context, praying for what will further this in the world or in one individual life (which may be ours).

The Basics: we should take nothing God gives us for granted but as for and give thanks for the things of daily life.

Forgiveness: we need it, and remembering that helps us to give it as well.

Security: Lead us not to a time of trial – life is not a certain thing and we can bring God the uncertainties.

Jesus also gives illustrations about the importance of being persistent in prayer, especially for others, and reminds us that God wants to give us good, not hard things.

We need to pray: prayer changes things, and especially the person who prays.

To think about:

- Is there anything that is new or thought-provoking in all of this, or is it all things you knew already?
- Do you consider yourself a disciple, an active learner and follower of Jesus? If so, what is he teaching you?
- As a disciple, can you undertake to give at least five minutes a day more than you do now to prayer for the season of Advent?