The Five Marks of Mission – sermon 1

**To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom**

*Isaiah 52.7-10 & John 20.19-end*

*“The Church does not have a mission. The Missionary God has a church”.*

Let me repeat this popular quote, because it forms the basis of our Mission Community study and discussion over the next 5 weeks:

*“The Church does not have a mission. The Missionary God has a church.”*

Today we start a new sermon series. All the churches in our Mission Community will listen to the same sermon on each of the next five weeks.

We’ll also meet via Zoom on a Wednesday evening to dig a bit deeper into the week’s topic and to break into parish or cluster groups for discussion. Please make every effort to come along – it will really help your church if at least a few people from each church join in, and especially members of the PCC who will need to discern how we take forward in each parish what we’ve learned practically.

We are focusing over these 5 weeks on the “Five Marks of Mission”.

I wonder if you’ve heard about them before?

The “Five Marks of Mission” were developed by the Anglican Consultative Council in 1984 as a statement of the *activity* Anglicans believe God is calling his church to undertake.

These five areas of activity are not new. Indeed, the Anglican communion introduces them by saying that they are “based on Jesus’ own summary of mission”. They are just a useful way of summarising what God is calling his church to.

My hope is that over the next 5 weeks we will grow as a Mission Community in our understanding of God’s mission in the world, that we will understand better the part God wants us to play in this mission, and that we will begin to discern some practical next steps to take in each parish or cluster.

 Not that we will only be thinking about our parish alone. Rather we will be taking a global, even cosmic perspective – for in Jesus God is making *all things* new.

 My prayer is that over the next 5 weeks God will lift our eyes to see the vast vista of his loving purposes for the world and that we will be caught up in playing our part in these purposes – locally, nationally and even internationally.

 So, what are these 5 marks of mission?

 Well, they are these:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Today we are looking at the first of these marks of mission: to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.

So, let me go back to the quote with which I began this sermon:

*“The Church does not have a mission. The Missionary God has a church.”*

It was Jesus who announced the “coming near” of God’s Kingdom as he began his public ministry. “The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good news” Jesus says in Mark 1.15.

The throughout his ministry Jesus taught about the kingdom; God’s rule on earth as it is in heaven.

He demonstrated it through his healings, exorcism and even raising the dead.

And he sent his disciples out to proclaim its arrival too –

see Luke 9.1-2 where “Jesus called the twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out demons and to cure diseases and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”

And Luke 10.9 where he sends out the seventy-two to “heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you’”.

God’s mission, carried out through Jesus, is to restore his kingly reign over all creation.

Jesus began this work through his earthly ministry,

Crucially he conquered evil, defeated death and made the eventual completion of the kingdom certain through his death and resurrection,

And now Jesus continues the work of growing God’s kingdom on earth through his body on earth, the church,

Until he will one day return to bring all things under his feet and establish God’s kingdom finally and fully in a renewed heaven and earth of God’s making.

And this is ‘Good News’.

God is love (1 John 4.8).

Jesus gives life in all its fulness (John 10.10).

And both the Old and New Testaments are rammed full of glorious pictures of what life in God’s kingdom is like.

I’m sure you can think of at least some,

Whether it’s the lion lying down with the lamb in Isaiah’s vision of peace and harmony

Or Ezekiel’s vision of a vast river, fruitful trees and abundant life in Ezekiel 47

Or the various visions of John in the book of Revelation, where “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21.4).

So God, through Jesus, has and still is proclaiming the Good News of his kingdom and is calling people to be part of it.

What was it Jesus said?

“*Repent*. For the kingdom is near”

Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God involved a call for people to reorientate their lives towards that kingdom.

The repentance involves a turning from sin and selfishness and receiving forgiveness…

…And a turning towards Jesus, as the king of the kingdom.

And so, this is the missionary work of the missionary God.

And it’s the work God continues through the body of Christ; the Church.

So, the question for us, is how is God calling us to “proclaim the Good News of his Kingdom”?

Let me make a few suggestions and pose a couple of questions for you to ponder.

Firstly, let’s pray for God to move by his Spirit, prompt people to be interested in his kingdom and direct us to them. Let’s pray, if you like, for divine appointments.

Secondly, lets be prepared as Peter says in 1 Peter 3.15 to “give an account of the hope that we have”.

Proclaiming the good news of the kingdom is not just a niche activity for the keen, but something for all of us who have experienced the life of the kingdom and can therefore point others towards the King.

But thirdly, let’s think and pray as churches about what we can do to proclaim the kingdom.

Who do we have contact with already?

Who are we failing to have any meaningful contact with?

Who can we build bridges towards?

How can we demonstrate the kingdom by our actions?

How can we tell people about the kingdom with our words?

Proclaiming the kingdom should be part of our DNA; who we are and what we do.

And fourthly, let’s take an interest in the proclaiming of the Good News of the Kingdom beyond our parish boundaries.

There are large parts of the world where there are very few churches; often because Christians are banned from meeting together. There are many countries in the world where owning a bible is considered a crime against national security and passing one on to others is a prisonable offence..

What can we do to support local churches where there is one and plant a church where there isn’t?

Could we pray for and financially support a mission organisation taking the Good News of the Kingdom into these needy places?

We are the church of the Missionary God.

Our Missionary God sent his Son to proclaim the Good News of his Kingdom.

He calls us to continue that work.

It is a duty… but it is a joy to be invited by God to share in his work which transforms lives and communities.

Let’s grasp the opportunity with both hands.

**Discussion questions**

1. What did you react against or towards in the sermon?
2. What questions did it raise for you?
3. What might God be saying to our church?