The Five Marks of Mission – sermon 2

**To teach, baptise and nurture new believers**

*Acts 3 12-19 Luke 24.36b-48*

**Introduction by Gary**

Today we are thinking about the second mark of mission: To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.

Today’s sermon, written by Jacque, helps us think through that topic using Luke’s account of the resurrection and a story from the life of the early church in Acts.

Listen to the sermon, and ask, “How does this help and direct us in the missionary task of teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers?”

**Jacque’s sermon**

In our Gospel reading today there are 3 gifts given which are perfect to all who would receive them. There is the very presence of the resurrected Jesus, his care and his teaching.

As Jesus suddenly appears in the room with 10 of the 11 disciples it is his care that is expressed first. Before he does anything more to startle them the Prince of Peace speaks gentle, calming words ‘Peace be with you’.

In the worldly context peace can usually be defined as the absence of conflict but the peace that Jesus gives means to have no fear for the present or the future.

Sin, fear, uncertainty, doubt and numerous other forces are at war within us but if we accept his gift of peace it will move into our hearts and lives restraining the hostile forces and offer comfort in place of conflict, it is the peace we crave for.

Augustine said – “our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.”

In Isaiah 53 we read ...’ he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.’

This is the peace of forgiveness made available to all mankind.

It exceeds anything we can dare to think of, it is un-measureable and eternal.

And as it says in Philippians 4 ‘the peace of God which transcends all understanding, it will guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ.’

John Lennon said “If someone thinks that peace and love are just a cliché that must have been left behind in the 60s, that's a problem. Peace and love are eternal.”

After offering his deep peace, Jesus continues to reassure – don’t be worried, don’t doubt, it is me, come closer, touch me, I am real, this is no figment of the imagination… and doubts and worries are replaced with joy and amazement.

The body of Jesus isn’t merely a restored human body like Lazarus.

Jesus was able to appear and disappear.

The resurrected body was immortal and this is the kind of body we will be given at the resurrection of the dead.

And then Luke misses a bit of the story that we can read in John and Mark, where Jesus appears to Thomas, who just cant get his head around the fact that the crucified Teacher and Master has risen. Jesus needs him to believe, he has a mission for Thomas that cannot be fulfilled without him believing wholeheartedly.

Jesus says to Thomas – ‘because you have seen you believe but blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’.

Some people need to doubt before they believe. If doubt leads to questions and questions lead to answers, and answers are accepted then doubt has done well. When you doubt don’t stop there, let your doubt deepen your faith as you search for the answer.

Continuing with Luke’s account - several days after the appearances in the upper room, Jesus and his followers have travelled to Galilee and back to Jerusalem where he appears to them once again and it is in this next section that Jesus teaches, he reminds the disciples of his previous teaching, he talks of the Law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms, in effect he is saying see the Old Testament pointed to him.

For example; his role as prophet was foretold in Deuteronomy (18:15-20), his sufferings were prophesied in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, his resurrection was predicted in Psalm 16 and again in Isaiah 53.

Jesus continues to open their minds to understand the scriptures. Today we have the Holy Spirit, when you read a difficult passage as well as asking others for their understanding, pray also that the HS will open your mind to understand, giving you the needed insight to put God’s word into action in your life.

So these men, the disciples, are the ones who Jesus could have judged for deserting him when he was arrested, who denied knowing him, who doubted his word – they were the yous and mes of this world today.

Today’s reading stops almost mid-flow, it misses an important part of Jesus teaching.

He says stay in the city as I am going to send you what my Father has promised; you are to be clothed with power from on high, the Holy Spirit.

None of us can do God’s work in our own strength; we need guidance and power from the Holy Spirit.

We will at times remember and trust and sometimes we will forget and doubt.

We will sometimes be able to speak with strength and conviction of all that God has done for us in Christ and sometimes we will panic and stutter.

That is why we need to accept the peace of Jesus Christ and the power and strength of the Holy Spirit daily, this is our comfort, our life-giver, the gift of God’s continuing presence within us.

God in his grace has called each of us and he sends us to be who he has equipped us to be in our homes, places of work, with family, friends, colleagues and even to strangers; remember, firstly your authority comes from God and secondly Jesus has demonstrated by words and actions how to accomplish the job he has given you.

As the Father sent Jesus, Jesus sends his followers .... which includes you and me.

Let us now look briefly at the reading from Acts where Peter has healed a crippled beggar at the temple gate. This beggar everyday would be found at Beautiful Gate which was one of the favoured entrances, many worshippers passed this way daily and it was thought praiseworthy to give to a beggar. Peter, along with John had gone to the temple to pray.

The healed beggar starts jumping for joy and praising God and all who see the miracle are filled with wonder and amazement and congregate around the healed man, Peter and John.

Now Peter, forgiven by Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit is filled with confidence and capitalises on the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ. His message is clear, he tells them firstly who Jesus is, secondly how the Jews had rejected him, thirdly why the rejection was fatal and fourthly what they needed to do to be saved.

John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by preaching repentance. Before Jesus started his earthly ministry he was baptised by John the Baptist, even though he had no sin.

As Jesus prayed God spoke and confirmed his decision to act by breaking into human history through Jesus and so Jesus starts his ministry by identifying with our humanity and setting an example for us to follow.

The baptism of water is an outward sign of repentance, humility and a willingness to turn from sin. It unites us with Jesus Christ in our death to sin and resurrection to new life in him, it symbolises submission to Christ and is a willingness to live God’s way and it identifies us as being members of God’s covenant people.

When we are baptised by the Holy Spirit there is an internal radiancy transformation by the Spirit’s power, it is a utterly unique and beautiful.

So Jesus offers us both forgiveness of sin and the power to live for him through the gifting of the Holy Spirit, it is this gift that enables us, gives us the courage to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**Possible discussion questions**

* “How does this help and direct us in the missionary task of teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers?”
* What did you react against or towards in the sermon?
* What questions did it raise for you?
* What might God be saying to our church?