

Sunday service for 22nd March 2020

Before we start you might listen to How great is Our God. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TsmgTE5ZG8>

Friends, welcome to Church this morning. Jesus says that where two or three are gathered in my name, he is in our midst. Now this morning we may not be physically gathered together but we have encouraged you to join us at our normal time to worship God together, so God is in our midst. We may not see Him; we may not feel him but God is with us and is in complete control of our world.

The writer of Psalm 29 has this to say,

¹ Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

² Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name, worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness.

³ The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters.

⁴ The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic.

⁵ The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

⁶ He makes Lebanon leap like a calf, Sirion like a young wild ox.

⁷ The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning.

⁸ The voice of the LORD shakes the desert; the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh.

⁹ The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

¹⁰ The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever.

¹¹ The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.

Prayer. Let us pray.

Sovereign Lord you sit enthroned above the flood. You are King on the throne forever. You are Lord of heaven and of earth. In the beginning the voice of the Lord broke across the empty chaos. It formed the heavens, the sun, the land, the seas, the animals and then us human. That voice was what brought light and hope to us as mankind. And that voice continues to bring light and hope to all of mankind today.

Lord forgive us for we have shouted out that voice. Forgive us for we have drowned out your grace. Forgive us for we have ignored your ways. Forgive us for we have crucified your son.

But let us hear again your voice in your word. Let us be encouraged by the presence of your Holy Spirit. Let us be drawn to your son. And so this morning let us worship you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Let us sing, let us pray, let us humble ourselves. Let us hear your voice speak to us from your Scriptures. And not just us but can your voice ring out to all the homes attached to this church. To all the Christians meeting together and individually in this suburb and region. To all believers in this land and across the nations.

May our voices join their voices so there is a chorus of praise. A cacophony of thanks. A joining together of all believers this day in a special way and can we do it so that Jesus might get the praise and the honour he deserves today. And we ask it all in Jesus name. Amen.

Songs (Charlestown)

Chorus of the Saved

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilpVNCSOH8k>

Worthy of all praise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAWcCOryYAw>

Song (Swansea)

Great is they faithfulness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cACqcURyvJA>

Bible Reading – Mark 6:1-13

6 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. **2** When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?” **3** Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

4 Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” **5** He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. **6** He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. **7** Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. **8** These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. **9** Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. **10** Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. **11** And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” **12** They went out and preached that people should repent. **13** They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them”. (NIV)

Announcements

- **COVID – 19.** Many thanks to all those who have taken the time to be part of this service today. We are greatly saddened that we are not able to meet this week nor will we be able to do so in the days into the future. But we will need the Lord in the days to come. And so, we need to keep on finding ways where we can worship. And we need each other and so we will need to be creative in safely meeting together. The elders are very excited about our plans and we will contact you I the coming week to tell you what we are planning to do. But simply next week we would like you to meet at one of over 20 hubs of 10 people that we will set up across our community. It will not be the same. It will not feel right. But we all need to make the effort in the days or weeks to come. So, stay tuned!
- **Focus for March – Work/School.** “**7** In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness **8** and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us” (Titus 2:7-8, NIV). The example we set has to back up the gospel we believe. Especially where people work closely with us. Do they see the Gospel of the God’s grace has completely changed us?
- **Annual Congregational Meeting.** After Church TODAY has been cancelled. We will reschedule it when we find a way to do it online.
- **Easter Outreach Day.** It has been decided that due to the current environment we will no longer be holding this OUTREACH day. We are putting plans together to replace with it with some form of REACH OUT. More details soon.
- **Baptism.** Barnabas B was being baptised TONIGHT at our Sunday @ 6 service. But we are thinking of trying to have it next week while we are live streaming it. So, you will need to tune in next week to see if we can make it happen.
- **Collection.** Of course, there will be no collection today but we would encourage you to think about direct deposit or sending a cheque in once a month so that we can continue to operate into the future. Our bank account Commonwealth Kotara BSB 062 829 A/C 1019 4850

Listen and Reflect.

We were going to learn a new song today but instead let us listen to a song based on Psalm 130. I will wait for you (Psalm 130). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJUqY_6tqo

Prayer. (From Jo Barlow)

Our loving Heavenly Father, we praise You because You are righteous and holy, and You hate sin.

- We are all too aware that even those of us who are Christians continue to sin in thought, word and deed, but we thank You that You have provided the way for our sins to be dealt with.
- Thank You that at the cross, Jesus took the burden of our sin on Himself and paid the penalty we should have paid.
- Thank You that having accepted His death on our behalves, You now look upon us as though we had not sinned: we are justified.
- And yet we continue to sin; though we cannot lose our salvation, we know that our sin grieves You and drives a wedge between us and You.
- Please forgive us, and keep prompting us by Your Holy Spirit to desire to be more Christ-like, so that we can remain in close fellowship with You and honour You in everything we do.

Lord, we think of our world affected so massively by the corona virus, including many in our own nation.

- Father, help us to trust You in this time of great uncertainty.
- Help us to be a beacon of light when we interact with many frightened people who are questioning why this is happening and how it will turn out.
- Lord, we don't know the outcome, but we know that You do, and that You can use even the effects of this serious infection for good.
- We do pray that the medical staff who are caring for people who are seriously ill would have strength and wisdom, and that You would keep them from falling ill themselves.
- We ask for the government and those in authority to make wise decisions that will help to limit the spread of the illness.
- We pray that a vaccine may be quickly developed to protect our citizens, and we thank You for the cooperation of different countries in this endeavour.
- We thank you for our ministers and elders who have prayerfully wrestled with the decision about how to best deal with the situation in our congregations at Charlestown and Swansea, and are still seeking to enable our church family to meet in different ways. Please continue to give them wisdom and discernment.
- We think of the Parsons in Japan and their team – they have asked us to pray for resilience and that they may stand out and share their hope in Christ. Indeed, we pray that for every Christian in all parts of the world.

O God, we bring to You the county of Yemen.

- We know there are only 1000 Christians in a population of 30 million, and that conversion is punishable by expulsion from their family and clan or even death.
- Please protect the believers there, and help them to remain steadfast in their faith.
- We ask that You would provide food and water in the midst of shortages, and that the civil war there might come to an end.

Lord, we think of our home groups, and know how important they are in enabling us to learn together and apply Your Word to the specifics of our lives.

- We pray for our home group leaders to seek to provide an environment that is conducive to this.
- We ask for Your help as they navigate the current situation; please help each home group to keep loving and supporting their members, even if some are at a distance.
- We pray that others who are not involved in a small group might want to join and experience the many blessings that they provide.

Father, we think of SRE teachers as they seek to introduce our young people to Jesus in an increasingly secular environment.

- We know what an important task this is, and we thank You that NSW schools are still open to this.

- Please help Karen Logan and others engaged in SRE to have wisdom, energy and enthusiasm.
- If classes are suspended because of the corona virus, we ask that Your Holy Spirit would bring to mind what the children have been taught even in unexpected ways.

Dear Lord, thank You that we have the avenue of prayer to connect with You. We never want to take this free access we have for granted. Help us to be a more prayerful people in times of trouble – to turn to You rather than relying on our own resources. And help us to love and pray for each member of our church family even though we may not be able to physically meet. We pray all of these things in and through the mighty name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Bible Reading – Mark 6:14-29

¹⁴ King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying,^[b] "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." ¹⁵ Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago." ¹⁶ But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"

¹⁷ For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. ¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹ So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, ²⁰ because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled^[c]; yet he liked to listen to him.

²¹ Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. ²² When the daughter of^[d] Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." ²³ And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom." ²⁴ She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. ²⁵ At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶ The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷ So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, ²⁸ and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. ²⁹ On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. (NIV)

Song (all) Just a closer walk with thee <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKQar5g1dbA>

Sermon.

I was 24 years of age, enjoying my job as an accountant but I couldn't get out of my mind the fact that God wanted me to go into the ministry. But it meant giving up my income, my opportunities to travel, my home town & even though I didn't know it at the time maybe even my family. So, I resigned from my position. I applied for theological college & when I was accepted, I told my parents & they said, "You can't be serious!"

"Why throw away all that you have worked so hard in getting?" It was an awkward moment that became an awkward year or four. I am from a great family. I love my parents and they love me greatly but they saw this as a rejection of their values. It was their son turning his back on the way they had raised me. It was saying there was something more than just financial security, something more important than just family ties. Following Jesus and continuing his mission on this earth had to be the highest priority in my life.

Friends there is a cost to following Jesus & you & I need to count that cost and be willing to pay that price. Are you willing to put in jeopardy your bank account? Your career? Your friends? Your family? Now in my case I still have financial security, I have travelled overseas, I have good friends and I haven't lost the relationship with my family but am I willing to risk them all over again? Will today I count the future cost of following Jesus? Will I go out of my way to serve him again today?

Because the storm clouds are gathering for Christians and the Church in this country. There is a prevailing view of unbelief, there is a rise in immorality and sin all around us. There is growing opposition and within a decade or two there might be outright persecution. Today we need to count the cost. Today we need to determine whether we will cross the pain line. Today we need to decide if we will truly follow Jesus anywhere for the sake of his mission.

For that is what our passage is all about in Mark 6. It will say to us that in the midst of unbelief from his home town of Nazareth, in the midst of the sin and debauchery of Herod's court, in the midst of the persecution of John the Baptist, Jesus sends his disciples out on a mission. And this is a pattern we will see in the gospels, again in the book of Acts and we are seeing throughout the world today. And so, the question we need to ask ourselves. In the midst of unbelieving, sin and persecution, will we follow Jesus and go out on his mission?

1. Unbelieving (verses 1-6) *"Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ²When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. The initial response of his home town to Jesus ministry is amazement. His teaching was amazing. The stories of what has happened throughout Israel, the healings, the miracles, the raising of Jairus daughter were equally amazing. So, it starts off good.*

But then questions begin to be asked, negative questions. *"What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? ³Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son & the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him".*

He just a local boy. We know his family. He's nothing special. He used to be a local carpenter, an odd job man. We have even heard rumours about his parents, apparently, he's Mary's child not Joseph's child, did you know that? Now you can see the tide is turning. There is no welcome home banner on the front gate. No newspaper headline declaring the local boy had made it big in the outside world. Instead of a ticker tape parade there is rejection, unbelieving!

⁴"Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." ⁵He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶He was amazed at their lack of faith". Jesus was too ordinary, too familiar, too common to be a prophet, let alone the Son of God. So, they didn't have faith in him and because of that there were very few opportunities for him to do any miracles. It wasn't that Jesus needed their faith to perform those miracles. It was if they didn't turn to Jesus with faith, there was no opportunity for him to respond to their faith with a miracle. For they just didn't believe in him. He was too ordinary, common.

One day a lady in a faded dress and a man in a homespun, threadbare suit walked into the office and asked to see the president of Harvard University. The receptionist thought that such backwoods hicks did not need to be in such a place and so stalled hoping to get rid of them. But after a couple of hours of waiting she let them in. The couple sheepishly walked into the office as the president got up in a huff and strutted toward them. The lady said, "We had a son who attended Harvard for a year and loved it. But about a year ago, he was killed in an accident. We would like to erect a memorial to him somewhere on campus." The president was shocked. He said gruffly, "we cannot erect statues for everyone who attended Harvard

and died. The place would look like a cemetery." "Oh no," the lady quickly explained. "We don't want to give a statue; we want to give a building." The president rolled his eyes. "A building! Do you have any idea how much that costs? We have over \$7 million dollars in buildings here at Harvard." The lady was silent.

The president was pleased. The lady turned to her husband and said, "Is that all it costs to start a university? Why don't we just start our own?" Her husband nodded. The president looked bewildered. At that point, Mr. & Mrs. Stanford walked away from Harvard and went to California where they established Stanford University as a memorial to a son that Harvard no longer cared about.

As Jesus ministered around Galilee, he encountered unbelief. Even in his home town. Especially among his own people. That was the air he breathed. That was the context of his ministry. And we currently live in an age of unbelief. Our youngsters are taught to question everything. We are not going to believe in what others tell us to believe in, especially when it comes to morals & faith. That is the air we breathe in. That is the context we are following Jesus in. But it is even more difficult than that because not only is there unbelieving but also;

2. Sin (verses 14-20). Let's skip a few verses and turn to v 14 because Jesus ministry was also in the context of gross sin. ¹⁴"King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." ¹⁵Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago." ¹⁶But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!" ¹⁷For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married".

If you think our leaders are not particularly great or moral just take a look at the sin at the very top of the political pyramid during Jesus day. Herod had divorced his first wife in order to marry his brother Philip's wife, whom she divorced to marry Herod. But it was a more sordid than that for Herod's father, Herod the great had ten wives & lots of kids and many of these children also married and had affairs with each other.

So not only was Herodias, Herod's sister in law, she was also the daughter of his half-brother Aristobulus which made her Herod's niece as well. Really it is like something out of the Bold and the Beautiful. As Chuck Swindoll has said "Herod's family tree is more like a twisted vine!"

But into this environment, Herod's step daughter, whom we know from other sources is called Salome dances in a provocative manner even though she is under age and still a teenager. And in a drunken stupor Herod likes what he sees and offers to give her anything up to half of his kingdom.

It is all incredible unsavoury. It is all rated R, actually it could even be rated XXX. And if you think it couldn't get any worse Salome asks her mother what she should ask for and she is encouraged to get the head of John the Baptist, the righteous, the brave, the courageous prophet who had stood up in the midst of this sin, who had warned Herod and Herodias that they were violated God's law. And what does he get in return for his faithfulness? His head chopped off! And Salome despite her tender years adds a gruesome touch. I don't just want John's head but on a platter, thank you very much!

This was what was going on in the background of Jesus ministry. This was the air that Jesus was breathing in while he preached the kingdom of God. It's quite a contrast isn't it? Blessed are the peacemakers. The pure in heart. The ones who hunger and thirst for righteousness where here are the people in power who are blood thirsty, looking to take revenge wherever they can get it & who are so filled with the good things in life, food and alcohol, that they can't even see their right from their left, their right from their wrong.

Leadership amongst God's people has truly broken down. It's become completely corrupted. Sex, power, pride, lust and revenge are the new normal. And in the midst of this debauchery, in the middle of this sinful society there is the forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist, with the courage to speak out. To call all people to repent. To look the most power man in the region in the eye and say God's judgement is coming.

It reminds me of the great moment during the Reformation in Scotland when, in St. Giles in Edinburgh, during a Sunday service, King James VI is sitting up in the royal gallery when Rev Robert Bruce, began to preach his sermon but Bruce was constantly interrupted by King James' noisy gossip with his entourage. So, Bruce would stop. And when Bruce stopped his sermon the king stopped gossiping. And then when Bruce started again, the king started up again. And so that went on for a while until Bruce stopped altogether and then he addressed the king directly from the pulpit. Talk about boldness. Very much like John.

Here is what he said. *"It is said to have been an expression of the wisest of kings when the lion roars all of the beasts of the field are quiet. The Lion of the tribe of Judah is now roaring in the voice of His Gospel and it becomes all the petty kings of the earth to be silent!"*

Wow! Imagine saying that to a king. John the Baptist did that. So did Robert Bruce. And they both paid a heavy price. Their lives. As did Jesus Christ as well. You see Herod actually thinks that Jesus is John the Baptist reincarnated. You see Mark has put this story in at this particular point in time because what has happened to John the Baptist is pointing to what will happen to Jesus. Jesus is following the template of all the faithful prophets that have gone before him. They will be rejected, they will be persecuted, and many of them will lose their lives. Because all faithful followers of God live among a cocktail of unbelief, of sin, of persecution. That is how it was prior to Jesus coming, that is how it was for John the Baptist. That is how it is going to be for Jesus and his disciples. Friends and that is how it could well be for us.

Haven't you watched movies that paint a similar story to what just happened in Herod's court? Don't you shake your head when you hear the latest disaster on the news about the breakdown of our society? Haven't you caught a glimpse of these things when your friends, maybe sometime your own family tells you of the web of deceit, the web of sin that is a part of their backstory.

I was brought up in a nice, middle class home where all the secrets and skeletons were locked safely away and I never got to see them. Nothing could prepare me for the pastoral situations I have had to minister to where other people's garbage and some of their own garbage is tipped all over the person in question and they are left gasping for breath. And think about it. Jesus left heaven for this. Jesus took on flesh and experienced all this. Jesus fulfilled God's mission to come and live in this place, to teach the people of this place, to model the life of a totally different place and eventually to die on a cross in order to save us from ourselves. To save us from our sin. To save us from our unbelief. To save us.

And how is the message of that kingdom going to go out? How is going to reach all the people that God wants it to reach? Well sandwiched in between the sin & the rejection. The persecution and the unbelieving is the mission. And it is a dangerous mission because it's done in the context of everyday life. And it's a costly mission because you get the sense that if they didn't accept Jesus, they are not going to accept his followers. If they killed John the Baptist, the odds are not good for the next wave of people calling on those around them to repent. But that is the mission that Jesus calls all of his disciples to participate in.

3. The Mission (verses 7-13) *"Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. ⁷ Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits".* You see in Mark chapter 1, Jesus calls his disciples to follow me and be fishers of men. In chapter 3, he chooses

12 of them that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive our demons. And so, by chapter 6 these 12 disciples had been taught by Jesus. They had been discipled by Jesus. They had been with him when he went to Nazareth and all the other places but now it was time for them to leave the safety of Jesus nest. He was sending them out to preach repentance.

So, they get to go on a short-term mission. A taster of things to come. Because Jesus was preparing them for a life of mission. So, it's part of their preparation. They will learn on the job so to speak. Yes, they can sit in a classroom and learn some more head knowledge but they will only really learn when they get out there and do it for themselves. And so, as he sends them out, he also gives them four principles to follow.

The first one is the partnership principle. They are going to go two by two. In the Greek "duo duo". They are to be dynamic duos. They are not to be lone rangers for they are easy targets. Better to be in pairs. For the advantage of pairs is that when one is discouraged, because their message has been rejected, the other can be a voice of encouragement. And when one is proud because their message has been accepted, the other can keep their feet on the ground. An essential part of the Lord's mission is that we should do it together.

William Carey, the father of the modern missionary movement, formed the Baptist Missionary Society with a few likeminded men. He was sent by this mission organisation with Dr John Thomas because they saw that two was better than one. But they were partnering also with people back home. Here are the words of John Ryland when he and others sent Carey to India. "*Our undertaking to India really appeared to me on its commencement to be somewhat like a few men who were deliberating on the importance of penetrating into a deep mine, which had never before been explored. We had no one to guide us, and while we were thus deliberating, Carey as it were, said, 'Well I will go down if you will hold the rope.' But before he went down, he, as it seemed to me, took an oath from each of us at the mouth of the pit to this effect - that while we lived, we never should let go of the rope.*"

You see the point? Carey, he was going to go, but he wasn't going to go without partners. He wasn't going to go without a team. Mission should, it must, be done together. In the past and even today. We can't be lone ranger Christians. We must do this Christian thing together. Even more so when we face an uncertain world. There is the partnership principle & then the provision principle. "*Take nothing for the journey except a staff no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. ⁹ Wear sandals but not an extra shirt ¹⁰ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town*".

The disciples are to travel light. Go lean and mean. No excess baggage. Take nothing that is not essential. And in this case no food, no money, no extra clothes. I look at my checklist when I go to Vanuatu on mission and it looks very different to this. Maybe I have got it all wrong! But if you have just the bare essentials you are going to have rely upon God. Trust in God. Depend upon God. As someone has said "Little provision requires big faith!" and don't you think we are going to need to trust in God to continue his mission into the future. No buildings. No large meetings. No certain. Armed only with our faith in God.

Jesus continues, "*¹⁰ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town*". Don't look for nicer digs. Don't shop around for a more comfortable place to stay. Don't be aloof. Live among the people. Share your life with them. Live in community. Be transparent. Realise we aren't always going to get things the easy way. But we are serving the God who has the whole world in his hands. "*¹¹ And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place & shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.*" That's the prophetic principle. If they reject what you are saying they need to realise the implications of that rejection. This act of shaking the dust is designed then to make people think about the implications of what they are doing.

The prophetic principle, partnership principle, the provision principle and lastly the participation principle. ¹²“They went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them”. They were being sent out by Christ with his authority to do what he had been called to do. To preach. To care. To defeat evil. To tell all and demonstrate to all the gospel of grace. No matter what they faced out there, they were to have the courage of their convictions to keep serving Jesus and to help fulfil the mission.

And to do that they would need to trust Jesus. This is his mission. We are to do things his way. Yes, it is done in the midst of sin and unbelief. And yes, they might suffer or be persecuted. But he is the one sending them. And he is the one who will hold the rope.

Now when Jesus sends his disciples out the next time, there are slightly different instructions. And when the apostles go out in the book of Acts, they have different terms of engagement as well. But the principles remain, go in teams, trust in Jesus, warn all of the implications of rejection and realise that Jesus is the one who is always holding the rope. He was in 30 AD he is today in 2020 AD.

And if we are to do that today there will be a cost. Because look around us there is sin everywhere, including in ourselves. There is opposition, rejection & persecution is coming & there is unbelieving everywhere. And the call is not to stay and gather people in but to go and preach the good news. And that is why we pray every week for the persecuted Church because for most of our world that is hard, hard work. And we need to be holding the rope. But it also means we need to also be going into the dark, with the light of the world Jesus. We need to be travelling light so that we can get up whenever we are called to leave. We are to do it together for I need you & you need me & we are to trust Jesus no matter what. The challenges are great in our world today but this is not time for us to shrink back this is the time for us to step forward and follow Jesus no matter what!

She was just 17 years of old. She was at school when the young man stood over, his weapon in her face. “Do you believe in God?” She paused. It was life or death question. She answered, “Yes I believe in God!” And he killed her. This scene could have happened in the Roman coliseum. It could have happened in the Middle Ages. And it could be happening in any number of countries around the world today. But this incident happened at Columbine High School, in Littleton, Colorado, USA on 20th April 1999.

If it happened in the USA it could happen here today in Australia. Are we ready for whatever God throws at us into the future? Are we already on mission, willing to go wherever he calls? It’s a dangerous world out there but do you know what, there is someone holding the rope. “I am immortal until God’s work for me is done” said missionary Henry Martin. So are we. Immortal until God ends our time here on earth. But what about those around us without the gospel. Who is going to warn them of what is to come? If it is not us?

Closing Song

Charlestown Servants of the Gospel
Swansea Take my Life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efUcfkEjmwE>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gf11rReeWIs>

Benediction

⁷“Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. ⁸These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. ⁹Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. ¹⁰Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. ¹¹And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”¹²They went out & preached that people should repent.”

Go out today and continue on the mission of Jesus, the mission of the 12, the mission of the Church to call people back to the Lord and in the midst of sin and persecution and even the virus coronin' may you and I continue to be a part of the mission of Jesus.