

## The Gospel of Peace

15 October, 2017

St Lukes celebration

St Lukes 9:30am and St Peter's 8am

Reading: Matthew 10:1-9

They call it cold calling: going to someone's door totally unannounced. When I was a naive young curate, the vicar of Hornby use to send me cold calling around the neighbourhood. It had very mixed results. Most often no body was home. But I do remember this one man. He was obviously a deeply religious man because when he opened the door to see the smiling curate he said "Jesus." "No," I said, "just one of his friends!"

Jesus is gathering a group around him today for a bit of cold calling. They are to go ahead of him into every town. No doubt with the end of his earthly ministry in mind he feels it's time to begin the process of empowering others with his message.

But what is the message?

Luke, who we celebrate today, is very clear what that message is. He writes, "Whatever house you enter first say, 'Peace' to that house. And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person."

We don't know a lot about St Luke. We know he wasn't a Jew. We know that in writing the books of Luke and Acts he was responsible for twenty five per cent of the New Testament. Some think him a doctor, others an artist. But we can infer from his Gospel a lot about him and his passions. For the Gospel of Luke could be called the Gospel of Peace.

When Jesus is born, Luke has peace on the lips of the angels, "Glory to God on high and peace on those he favours." Right here in the middle of his Gospel, Luke has peace as the central message of the kingdom. Again at the end, when Jesus enters Jerusalem, the people shout, "Blessed is the king who comes. Peace in heaven." Of course Luke doesn't have this peace focus on his own. Luke also has a passion to show that the underdog, the Samaritans, women and the poor are Jesus' concern too, but, peace is the central message of today's passage.

But what does peace in our context look like?

Well, this last week has been mental health awareness week. And many of us in the diocese have been shocked by the death of a young 15 year old man by his own hand. We have been holding the Bryndwr parish and the family in particular, in prayer. Every night for over a week fifty plus people have been coming to the parish for night prayer to find solace from each other and peace from God. Our hearts were broken for those close to us. Our daughter has been trying to support a young woman who keeps self harming and we have been trying to support her as she does that. You don't need me to tell you that one third of all young people self harm at some point. Something has gone seriously wrong. To say we are raising young people who aren't at peace with themselves is an understatement.

The famous psychologist Carl Jung had a Roman Catholic priest come to him. He was in a bad way. He didn't like his life and he had begun to drink heavily. I want you to go home said Jung to him and spend every evening quietly with yourself. Don't listen to the radio, don't read, don't listen to music. Just sit quietly on your own. Just be at peace. The next week the priest returned in an agitated state. "I can't do it," he said. "I just can't sit quietly with only myself as company." Jung responded, "If you don't want to be around yourself, what right have you got to inflict yourself on your parishioners?"

We are human beings not human doings and yet we value not who we are but what we do. To sit quietly to be at peace with ourselves is not something many of us do. Our world is so full of distractions.

What is this peace that Christ brings us? There is the peace of meaningful lives. We are not just a random collection of atoms at sea in a meaningless universe. We are the loved and cherished children of God. We are loved by God and we have the task of loving others. This gives us the peace of deep meaning. We have the peace of grace. We see in our lives God's grace at work. In the care we receive from others, we see God's grace at work. We see God's grace in the natural world. We see God's grace in Jesus Christ,. We see God's grace in the stories of our faith and in the lives of the saints, and this brings us peace.

We have the peace of knowing that God's love is stronger even than death. That death is not the end but the beginning of new life with God. and this brings us peace We also have the peace of being able to have a close, even intimate, relationship with Jesus. Christians believe Jesus is not dead but able to be talked with. His abiding presence can be found within us and the within the community of the church, the body of Christ. This too is a source of peace.

When we let it, our faith brings profound peace. The peace of meaning, hope, forgiveness friendship and grace. This is the message that Christ has entrusted to us. Peace because of Christ. We no longer need be afraid, God loves us with an abundant, eternal, indestructible love. We can be at peace.

When we have discovered this for ourselves, however tentatively, then we have good news for a peace-starved world.

These cold calling, peace bearing missionaries of Luke 12, what is the response to their message? Verse 17 tells us that the 72 returned with joy. "Lord," they said, "In your name even the demons submit to us.

What would it be like to see yourself each day as a missionary of peace? You don't need to go cold calling, but God is calling you to be a messenger of peace in every situation you find yourself in. God is calling us, the people of St Luke's the people of St Peter's, to be messengers of the gospel of peace and to offer it to a world which cannot find it on its own.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.