

Reading: Luke 10:1-11,16-20

You can soon tell a real trumper from a novice. A real trumper packs light. When Mike Baker and I tramped Mount Somers we carefully shared out the stuff. Mike had the gas stove, cans of fruit, rice pudding, water, fruit, matches and the first aid kit. I had the can opener. Well, I was supposed to have the can opener. We soon got talking with the other trampers. One was a doctor and the other 3 were hunters. Pretty soon the hunters produced a marijuana joint and began smoking it between themselves. "What do you guys do?" they asked. "Well," I said, "I'm a vicar, he's a drug and alcohol counselor and she's a doctor." You have never seen three people leave in such a hurry.

Today in the Bible reading Jesus is sending his disciples out and he is urging them to travel light. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals. He sends 70 or 72 depending on whether you speak Greek or Hebrew, and this number is symbolic for all the nations of the world. All the people of the world are to hear about God's love.

But what does travelling light look like in our context? Well today we again celebrate a remarkable woman. We know her as Nurse Maude. Like the 70, she was sent to cure the sick and to proclaim God's kingdom. A typical day for her would begin in prayer at the Community of the Sacred Name with our Anglican nuns. Then she would go to the local vicar of St Michael and All Angels and get a list of the sick, and then she would go on her rounds. When she entered a house, like the 70 of the gospels, she began by wishing peace on that house. She always started by saying a prayer, then she would give medical treatment, and finally came the advice. She would simply tell the family what they must do to get better. She didn't hold back. Initially she walked, then she had a bike. Eventually others joined her, and she was given an Austin, which you can view today at Ferrymead Historic Park. She was known for her terrible driving. She would stop in the middle of the road riding the clutch while greeting her many patients.

Today we are honored to have with us representatives of the Nurse Maude Association who have continued her work. We have also named our new chapel after her, the Nurse Maude Chapel of Compassion, and we have commissioned an icon in her memory.

Like the disciples of the Gospel, she traveled light. She owned very little. She relied on the generosity of others. The generosity of a few fellow Anglicans got her started. To start with she was only paid in kind or koha, and yet she was rich because she believed in what she did. She could see, for all her lack of worldly wealth, the difference she was making in the lives of others. Our consumer society measures our value in what we have. Nurse Maude measured her life not in how much she had but in how much she gave.

But why compassion?

This last week our hearts have been broken when we think of a mum going about her day, walking after work from the bus to her house and being randomly killed. And all so close to home in Cheyenne Street. She had done nothing to deserve this. Like you, I felt so much for this family and the people of the street. And although it's hard, we also felt for a man so deranged that he should do such a thing. So, I visited and have offered to come back and bless the place where she died to help and bring peace, just like the disciples of the Gospel and Nurse Maude have done.

Compassion literally means 'to feel with'. Com - passion. To feel another's pain with them is to want to stand alongside them. It makes us angry that something so dreadful has happened in our community. Compassion makes us want to do something, to make a difference in our world. It makes us want to change things for the better, to feel another's pain as if it was our own. It is a God given gift.

Nurse Maude also felt this God given gift of compassion.

She was moved with compassion not just to care for people one on one but often stepped out of her role of ministering to the sick to embarrass the powerful. She took on the Hospital Board, a collection of this province's most powerful people, at the state of the Christchurch hospital. It was a cold, damp, rat infested building right by the Avon. She nagged the government into action to set up a camp for the many dying of TB. She confronted the authorities to care for the victims of the deadly Spanish flu. Much like Covid, the Spanish flu took the lives of many millions around the world. Her actions in setting up a quality camp for Spanish flu victims saved hundreds of lives. The most important journey we can ever take, is a journey of the heart. It is a journey to come to know how much we are loved and cherished by God. This is the journey of a lifetime. And as we grow in the knowledge of the love that God has for us, then we are set more and more free, to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God.

What is the reward for all this freedom and following anyway?

Well, the Gospel ends with the 70 returning with joy at all they had seen and done in Jesus' name.

And what of Nurse Maude? Well - what joy we must know that over 200,000 nursing visits to homes are done in her name each year throughout Canterbury, Wellington, and Nelson Marlborough.

May we in our day show compassion, whether it's a local stabbing or simply a small act of kindness, whether it's taking on the powerful or a prayer for a sick person. May we too allow ourselves to be moved by compassion, the compassion which is God's gift. We see compassion supremely in the life of Jesus. May we travel light with compassion as our guide, and may we remember to bring the can opener.