

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups August 2nd 2009
The Apprentice! Week 2 The Task. Luke 9:1-6



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

12 Disciples, 1 Task to become the Apprentice of Jesus Christ!

Over these six weeks we will be looking at some of the challenges of being an Apprentice of Jesus Christ. - The Invitation, the Task, The Lost, The Greatest, The Failure and the Test! Unlike the BBC's Apprentice the goal is not one apprentice and the rest losers but a church full of life long Christian apprentices. not "you're fired"... but rather "you're required!"

Jesus called the 12 apostles or main disciples together: over the 3 year period of Jesus' ministry they probably didn't all stay together all the time, and would have sometimes been with him on tour, sometimes with their families. But He knew they needed to gain practical experience and confidence in what would become their own ministry once He had died, risen and gone back to be with the Father. Who were Jesus' disciples? read Luke 6:14

At the beginning of our reading, Jesus gave the disciples power and authority to drive out demons and heal the sick. He was sending them on a journey, to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. In Mark's gospel we read that they went out in pairs. They did what they were told – see v 6 – going out into the villages, preaching and healing everywhere. We are today's disciples. We don't have to be perfect, just willing to be led by Him, leaning on God, and not relying on ourselves.

In fact, at the end of the TV series in episode 12, Alan Sugar chooses Yasmina, the one who can "go it alone" and he rejects the one he'd need to spend time on - is that what Jesus would do? I don't think so! Because the power and authority for the disciples, Jesus' apprentices, came from Jesus (vv1-2), not from their own resources. We can rely on Jesus who WILL spend time on us, unlike Alan Sugar!

So what are we to do on the journey we are sent on? Should we expect to cast out demons and heal the sick? Yes, Jesus did cast out real demons as well as heal the sick and some of us will have this same ministry now. We can all pray for those who are ill, as we do every week in church. But the specific spiritual gifts of healing and exorcism are not given to everyone, so what about the rest of us? We are all called first and foremost to witness to our faith, to bring hope where people have none. To show Jesus' light and love in the dark places of people's lives. To preach the gospel in our lives.

Some questions to think about: firstly, do we know that we have Jesus' authority? His power? And secondly, where is God sending us? These 2 questions are interlinked, because Jesus equips us for whatever He wants us to do, He gives us His Holy Spirit's power and authority as He sends us out. Look at what He prayed for His disciples just before his arrest and crucifixion: Read John 14:25-27. The Holy Spirit will teach us all things and we do not need to fear. But we do need to listen to Him and be sure we are following where He has led us, that we are going out where He has sent us. That takes discernment and we may need to pray with and talk to other Christians to be sure what our task on the journey may be.

Another question that comes to mind is this: what might we need to leave behind/put aside? The disciples were to take nothing with them, and neither should we – we lean on Jesus. Journeying with Jesus means travelling light. We may need to lay aside and leave behind our own ideas, prejudices, or natural capabilities and way of doing things. Those of us who are used to being competent at what we do may find this hard. We don't like to undertake things where we are not sure of the outcome and risk failure, just at St Peter in last week's fishing story, when he was reluctant to trust Jesus and put out his nets again after a night of failed fishing. We may prefer to limit ourselves to doing things that we know we can do well but in doing so we may limit what God can achieve through us and also perhaps the ways He wants to bless us.

A 3rd area of questioning concerns this: are we each able to explain/express the gospel simply to those around us in ways they will understand? This is such an important part of what we need to do, and an important part of our vision here at St Paul's – each of us telling the story of what God has done for us in ways that our own contacts will relate to. On one level it may mean actually rehearsing what we would say if someone asked why we were a Christian; if we were asked what is there about our faith that gives hope and light. But there are also other perhaps more concrete or practical ways we can each explain the good news to those whom we meet. Do you remember our Archdeacon preaching here a few months ago, Julian Henderson? Do you remember him saying, as a challenge to each one of us, "What sermon are you going to preach this week?" That challenge still stands – what sermon will you and I preach as we go on the journey where Jesus has sent us and try to bring God's kingdom into our street, our town, our work-place? How will our lives reveal God to others in ways they may recognise? It may be through a simple kindness, or volunteering for something to help the needy, be it in the town, or with the elderly, or children, or Besom, whatever. How can we each best share the Gospel with those we meet?

We are on a journey with Jesus, so don't try to pack too much – the task is urgent and we don't need to be super-prepared. We just need to put our boots on and get out there. To go where God shows us and rely on Him for what we may need, leaving behind any preconceptions that might limit what He wants to do. And to be prepared to share our story of what God has done, in words, actions and acts of grace. And that will make each of us a successful Apprentice for Jesus – we're hired!

Witness: choose from these questions to discuss

1. Tell other members of your group about the first (or most recent) time you tried to learn something new from someone else, i.e. being an apprentice. What are you good at?
2. How do you feel about the concept of traveling light with Jesus? What might you need to give up in order to allow God to work more freely through you?
3. Talk about any times when you have felt completely out of your depth yet God has seen you through. Read and discuss John 14:25-27
4. What would you say if asked why you have hope in your life? Can you tell your story of faith? Practice with each other!
5. How else might you "preach a sermon" this week?