

Discipleship Sermon Series Booklet.



**All Saints' Harbury and Ladbroke
September / October 2016.**

Introduction:

During September and October 2016 we ran a six week sermon series focusing on what it means to be a disciple or follower of Christ. All of the sermons were well received and many were listened to again from the podcasts available on the All Saints' Harbury website or using the URL:

www.allsaintsharbury.org/podcasts

All six sermons are still available to listen too through the website but have also been collated in written form in this booklet. The scripture readings are also referenced and we recommend reading those before listening to or reading the sermons. You might also want to pray a simple prayer such as the one below before you begin:

*Loving God, I come before you open to receive your Word.
Help me to hear you speak through these words spoken or read.
Help me to be open to your Holy Spirit who brings the Word alive.
Show me how I to be a more committed disciple of Jesus Christ your Son
And how I can be a light that leads others to become disciples too.
Grant me the grace to know you more clearly
Love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day.
Amen.*

(adapted from a prayer by Richard of Chichester 1197-1253).

Whilst you are reading you might wish to keep these questions in the forefront of your mind:

- *What is God saying to me through this sermon?*
- *How does this sermon help me to know Jesus Christ more clearly, to love him more dearly and follow him more nearly?*
- *What simple thing could I begin to do, or stop doing, which will help me become a more committed disciple of Jesus Christ?*

Week 1: God's mission on earth is our commission.

Readings: Isaiah 49:1-7 and Matthew 28:16-end.

Preached by Revd Nikki.

I recently spent a few days on the Dorset coast with my family and some friends. The weather was fabulous so we spent much of the time on the beach, listening to the crashing of the waves, the sound of the sea. I love the coast but it's not actually my favourite place to be.

I prefer to be in the mountains. I find the sea quite frightening, chaotic and unpredictable whereas the mountains have a sense of certainty about them, a grandeur and majesty that I find compelling and so any Bible stories that involves mountains always speaks into that sense of awe and wonder.

I think Saint Matthew liked mountains too as they seem to have a special place in his Gospel.

All the good stuff happens on mountains. Jesus temptations, the sermon on the mount, the transfiguration, the events at the mount of olives and now this final conversation, between Jesus and his disciples that we've just heard in our Gospel reading.

The disciples have gone to Galilee and following Jesus' instruction they head up the mountain. The conversation doesn't begin until after the disciples have 'worshipped' Jesus.

Matthew uses this word worship on several occasions throughout his Gospel and he uses it to describe a sense of reverence. The disciples come to Jesus in reverence.

To revere someone is to have a deep respect for that person, to hold them in high esteem and to value them.

Before any conversation can begin between Jesus and the disciples on top of the mountain in galilee, the disciples approach Jesus in reverence and in respect. This says a lot about the attitude we too must have towards Jesus. The conversation begins with Jesus informing the disciples that he has been given *"All authority in heaven and on earth"*

Who gave him that authority? - God. Why was it given to him? - Because he has defeated all that is broken and flawed in this world-

He defeated rejection, he defeated humiliation, he defeated betrayal, he defeated death,

he defeated hate. He defeated it all with Love!

His all-powerful love is what gives him the authority over heaven and earth. And it is this power of love which opened the door for the fulfilment of God's promise to make all things new. And that door is still open today, that promise is still being fulfilled.

Love is still the most powerful force of good on earth and it is still doing the work needed to bring about God's promise. This we might describe as God's mission, or project. Let's call it God's Love project! The thing is this, God does not work on the Love project alone. It's a collaboration. It requires our input, all of our input.

That conversation on the mountain continues with Jesus telling the disciples to *"Go and make disciples of all nations"*

and ends with Jesus telling them that he will always be with them. He doesn't just ask Peter or John to 'Go and make disciples', he asks all of them, all eleven of them and later as more are added to that number, they too will be commissioned to 'Go and make disciples'. The responsibility to 'Go and make disciples' is not just down to one or two of us, it falls on every single one of us. Anyone who claims to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the one who defeated death with Love is commissioned to work on the Love project. Anyone who prays the words that are first found in Matthews's gospel-

"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

is commissioned, called, to play an active part in bringing that prayer to fruition. We might use the words of Isaiah to help us understand what God asks of each of us.

"I will give you as a light to the nations that my salvation will reach to the ends of the world".

We are the light that God gives to the world, and His love project is all about salvation.

The aim of God's project is to save ALL. All people, all things, all creation. We, as his followers, his worshipers, his friends, his adopted children, are given as a

light to a dark world and commissioned to play our part. But how do we become the light and what does it mean to be the light? Well all we need is here in the short passage at the end of Matthews Gospel that we heard this morning and in the words of the Lord Prayer:

First we follow Jesus and obey his instruction- just as the disciples followed his instruction to go to the mountain in Galilee. Then we worship and revere him through prayer and praise and in communion with others. Then we stop and listen to him, remembering his promise to be with us always and to guide us to the places we must go. Then and only then are we ready to become the light, to act in love to all people and all things. And what does the light look like? it looks like love, it looks like forgiveness, it looks like bread, bread we receive, bread we break and bread we share with others, it looks like reconciliation, it looks like salvation.

That's a lot to remember so I leave you with a way of remembering that we all know off by heart. The Lord's prayer- the words of the Lord's prayer contain everything we need to remember what God's love project is really about, what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus and how we are to be the light that goes out and makes disciples.

Our father, in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and ever. Amen.

Week 2: The 12 are called but for what purpose?

Readings: Acts 1:1-14 and Mark 3:13-19.

Preached by Revd Craig.

What is a disciple?

Which *person* best fits you in your WALK WITH GOD (see sheet)

The word disciple comes from the Latin word 'discipulus' meaning pupil or learner - a person who accepts the teachings and follows the examples of another.

A disciple is someone who believes in and helps spread the teachings of another. It is someone who learns from a leader and someone who wants to live life according to the wishes and commands of the teacher.

The word **discipline** comes from the same Latin root and says something about the characteristic of discipleship (requires effort, focus and energy – its something we need to work at).

Disciples are people with a desire to:-

A) Be closer to God

B) To learn from their teacher so that they might do as he/she did and to do what their teacher asks them.

Disciples are called to do what?

I. **To be with Jesus** – the twelve were called *firstly* to this and so are we.
- In the Synoptic Gospels (Matt, Mark, Luke) only Mark says this, that we are called *firstly to be with Him before doing anything*.

We are good at DOING – running around, achieving our goals, being seen to be busy, fulfilling expectations etc BUT how much time do we spend just simply BEING with God?

Remember the story of Martha & Mary? (Lk 10.38-42) Martha was troubled because Mary *just sat* at Jesus feet and yet, Jesus commended Mary for doing so! Jesus was busy, so much so that he needed to get away from the crowds and simply be – to be with God.

We too need times of quiet and stillness – dedicated time each day alone with God. If we are to be serious about being disciples, we too need to take serious

our time spent with God whereby we keep centred, connected and focussed on Him. What's your prayer life like? Do you do this?

Point: Disciples *want* to pray! In Luke 11 we hear that Jesus disciples asked him how to pray, such was their desire.

To be sent out

We heard last week about God mission being our commission (Matt 28) and our reading from Acts 1.14 reiterates this. Once again, on the mountain, Jesus sends his disciples out to be His witnesses. Notice this: to be a witness.

- A witness tells of what they've experienced (witness in court for example)
- A witness is someone who is simply being honest about their faith and how it has been for them (we can all do that we don't need to be theologians, academics or master public speakers!).
- Take the opportunities when asked . . chances will come! (at work, at home, on the street) – when you talk with people , you are being a witness.

BUT . . .do not worry about what you might say, or saying something wrong. Trust and have faith that God will help you (Acts 1 tell us that it is through the Holy Spirit that we shall be His witnesses!)

So, a disciple - is desirous to learn, is dedicated and focussed, studies under another, learns from the example and expertise of a teacher so that they might be equip themselves for all the master wants from them.

Back to the Tree picture – You may have reflected briefly on which BLOB represents where you feel you are in your WALK WITH GOD but where would you like to be?

Disciples grow! The first disciples did so in their three years with Jesus because they were constantly with him, listening, watching and putting into practice what they had learnt. True for us too if we SPEND TIME WITH HIM, if we sit at his feet and desire more from him.

We do this and we will grow!

Week 3:

If you want to walk on water you need to get out of the boat.

Readings: Romans 10:5-1 and Matt:14 22-33.

Preached by Peter Took.

Heavenly Father, help us to understand the Gospel today, and help us to identify with the disciples, and thereby to learn something of ourselves today. Amen.

Most people refer to this passage from Matthew's Gospel as "Jesus Walking on the Water". The time when God, the creator of the world, stepped outside of the ordinary - to walk on water. Well, God is all-powerful, all knowledgeable, so his walking on water, in a sense, is no big deal. *This* passage is about something *much bigger*.

Let's look at it.

Immediately before this, Jesus had fed 5,000 men, plus women and children, - probably close to 15,000 in all. Jesus then ushered the disciples into a boat - with instruction to make for the other side. Then, he went back and sorted out the crowd. And then went up the mountain by himself, to pray.

The boat was soon "far from the land" -In fact, another account of this event, as told in versions of *John's* gospel, says they had sailed about 25 or 30 furlongs. Don't do the arithmetic! Jewish furlongs were about 7, 7½ perhaps, to the mile, so the distance they had sailed was approaching 4 miles. The Sea of Tiberias is never much more than 10 miles wide, so they were not-far-off the middle. About as far from the land as was possible.

And then, in the early morning, Jesus came. Walking towards them on the waves. When the disciples saw this, they were terrified. They cried out in fear! "It's a ghost", they said. Jesus reassured them and said "Do not be afraid. It is I." I'm so pleased to see that, even in a stressful situation, he was using the correct grammar! "It is I."

"Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you by walking on the water." "All right" said Jesus - "come!" Peter stepped out of boat, and onto the water. *What an incredible act of faith*. Joining Jesus in what he is doing is *an act of faith*. Joining Jesus, where he is, and doing what he is doing, are key components in being a faithful disciple.

Sometimes we see Peter as this impetuous man who never looks before he leaps. But on this occasion I feel that Peter was thinking pretty clearly.

He saw what his Lord was doing, and he wanted to join him in it. For us, as Christians - as devoted disciples - the whole point is **not** to ask Jesus to get in the boat with us, but for us to **join** Jesus, in what **he** is doing.

Back to the story. Peter went over the side of the boat and **he walked on the water**, looking toward Jesus. They *were in* a very choppy sea, with high winds. And Peter felt the strong wind. He looked around at the high waves, And he was frightened. At that moment, Peter did not trust the Lord fully, because Peter was afraid of the waves. Afraid of the storm. Afraid for his life. And in fear, Peter took his eyes off Jesus, ... and he began to sink. And instantly, Jesus reached out and caught him. "Where's your faith" Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

Life itself is rarely calm, is it? Life, for most people, is perhaps not a thunder-and-lightning storm, but is often a succession of heavy showers. Yes, life around us is often uncomfortable. Yet, Jesus does ask us to get out of the relative safety of the boat and to join him where he is, to join him in doing what he is doing, even though often it's likely to be a rough passage.

Do we have any golfers here today? In the early days of golf, the golf balls had smooth surfaces. Then it was discovered that after a ball had been roughened up a bit, it would go further. So then golf balls were manufactured with dimpled surfaces. So it is with life; it takes some rough happenings to give us the experience and the confidence to go further along the road.

Peter took his eyes off Jesus. Peter couldn't fix his sight *effectively* on more than one thing at a time - any more than we can. If we are immersed in our own problems, we simply *cannot* focus on Jesus. So many things can lead to our **losing that focus**.

Not letting Jesus into our lives ... *will do it*.

Living only for the pleasures of the secular world ... *will do it*.

Apathy ... *will certainly do it*.

In a convent school, the children were lined up for lunch. On the table was a large box of apples. On it was a prominent notice that said:

"Take only ONE. God is watching."

Moving further along the line, at the other end of the table was a large plate of chocolate biscuits. This also had a notice, obviously in a child's handwriting.

The notice said:

"Take all you want. God is watching the apples."

God is watching the apples, God is watching the chocolate biscuits, And God is watching you and me

There's another part of today's reading, that we need to examine.

Peter climbed out of the boat. *How come the other disciples ... didn't?*

Firstly, they were afraid. It was dark, and they were miles from land in a fierce storm.

Secondly - they had doubts. They believed they had seen a ghost. No man had ever walked on water before, and they still did not realise that Jesus Christ was no ordinary man.

Thirdly, they felt safer in the boat. That's not difficult to understand.

Are we like those other disciples? Are we afraid to step out? Do we have doubts?

Last, but not least, do we feel *so safe* - where we are - ...that we are unwilling to step out?

The boat (that we cling to for dear life) is our 'comfort zone'. *Our* boat - our *safe haven* - may be our house; our car; our job; our money; our position at work; our relationships; our church; our family; our friends; or *anything* that makes us *feel comfortable*.

Any time we refuse to step out in faith to do a great work for the Lord - because we don't want to leave our comfort zone - we will miss out on a blessing that the Lord has for us.

If the other disciples wanted to get to Jesus as Peter did, they also had to step out of the boat. Likewise, in order for us to receive the blessings that God has for us, we must sometimes *step out of life's boat*.

And *when* we step out, we can expect some storms, we can expect some problems, but we should not fear, we should not doubt, we should not be reluctant, *because Jesus' hand is stretched out to support us.*

The reading we heard from Romans 10 has a searching progression of questions, which is very pertinent to what we are examining in Matthew 14. It begins with a statement by St Paul: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved". *No problems with that!* And then it progresses to some questions, which include:

"How are they – how are we - to call on one in whom we do not believe?"

Our eyes need to be focussed, in faith, on Jesus.

And "How are they *to believe* in one of whom they have never heard?"

We must proclaim Jesus, at every opportunity.

and: "How are they *to hear* God, without someone to proclaim him?"

Someone has to do something . I am someone! You are someone!

When God, the creator of the world, The all-seeing, all-knowing God, stepped outside of what we call "the ordinary" to walk on water - *That was really no big deal.*

For us mortals, the message for us today is all about Being True Disciples...

Now, that *is* big.

Week 4 : The cost of discipleship

Readings: 2 Cor 5:14-20a; 6:2-10 and Luke 14:25-33

Preached by Alison Abbot

Everything we do has a cost. The cost of some things may be too high and you choose not to pursue them.

Being a disciple has a high cost.

Being a disciple has a high cost for some believers. It may cost them their job, home, even life. They accept that and still follow Jesus.

Nabeel Qurashi, who left Islam and became a Christian said

“My first death threat came within two months of becoming a Christian. At the time I was very zealous, so I said ;Bring it on.’ Since then I have got married and had a daughter and that changes things a bit; but the message is still the same. You can be killed if you are following Jesus because Jesus was killed and you are following him.”

This is not just for the elite few. Jesus said

“none of you can be my disciple unless you give up everything you have”

Jesus spoke these words to the large crowds that were following him. There is a distinction between being a follower and being a disciple. The followers could enjoy the experience and walk away unchanged. Disciples are called to love Jesus above everything else.

People will pay a high cost for something that matters

Think about a potential Olympic champion who focusses on training and a winning lifestyle, and is prepared to deny themselves in order to achieve their goal.

Or parents who sell everything they have to afford lifesaving treatment for a dying child.

Take up your cross

Jesus said, “*Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me can not be my disciple.*”

Carrying a cross is a one way journey to death. Why would Jesus discourage people?

Parable 1

The man contemplating a building project. A sensible person gets quotations on the cost before they begin. Then they choose whether to go ahead or not.

We can chose to be Jesus' disciple or to walk away, but..

Parable 2

..We cannot sit on the fence.

The King had to decide whether to go to war of seek a peace treaty. Doing nothing was not an option.

God sets that choice before us.

We are not forced to be a disciple but we can't sit on the fence. We all must decide.

Only the wholehearted can be disciples

We are called to love Jesus more than anything else. We can only do this in response to God's wholehearted love for us. Think about a couple in love who only have eyes for each other and count the moments until they can be together.

The cost of discipleship is being prepared to let go of everything else and fall into God's love.

Week 5 : Being equipped for service/love is the key.

Readings: Ephesians 4:1-17 and John 13:33-35

Preached by Gemma Took

During the last four weeks we have been on a journey in discipleship. We have looked at that great commission and the tremendous and demanding job that Jesus entrusted to the apostles;

we have looked at why they were called, these ordinary men, in ordinary occupations, and we can identify with that; we have looked at having to take risks in Jesus name, getting out of the boat and walking in unfamiliar places; and last week, we looked at the cost of discipleship,

The cost of true discipleship **is** high and at sometimes – **very high**. And at those times, the only thing that will help us along our journey, is trusting in the love of God. Love is the key.

What Jesus demands of us in today's gospel reading , is enormous.

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another. By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another".

How can we love as Jesus loved? He gave up his life for us; For love of us.

At this point in the gospel, Jesus is running out of time to get his message over, and therefore it is imperative that his disciples are **fully equipped for the job they will have to take on..** Especially, because, you see, just before this reading in John's gospel, we hear of Judas slipping out into the night, to perform his act of treachery,.....to betray Jesus.

Judas, one of Jesus' closest friends. Judas who had walked with Jesus,eaten with Jesus,..... listened to Jesus,seen the wonderful things Jesus did,.....then he turns his back on Jesus, and in disappointment, perhaps, betrays him. And, Jesus knows it is a matter of hours before the authorities come for him.

John's gospel is different to the other three. It is deep, full of meanings, some hidden and difficult, and others more open and easier to understand.

For me, John's gospel is a more intimate, more personal gospel and this is what makes these words of Jesus so very powerful .

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another.

These words are on the one hand a challenge, and on the other, full of hope and comfort. Here is Jesus, hoping for, **wanting** a full and personal, intimate, relationship with his friends – with us.

Nikki entitled today's readings, "love is the key". The key to being an effective and loving disciple. **BUT** actually, love should be the key to everything we do. If everyone loved their neighbour, totally and unconditionally, we would not be praying week after week for relief and help for war torn Syria, for areas in Africa affected by famine, we would not be praying for abused and sick people.

So how do we love each other as Jesus loved? Our Ephesians' reading calls us to action, to use our gifts. God has given us all different gifts to..... "equip the saints (that's us) for the work of ministry,..... for building up the Body of Christ,..... until all of us **come to the unity of faith**".

We have different gifts and each of us is called to do different things for God. And those different gifts are to be used to build one whole. We are like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. It is only when we achieve our spiritual majority in our eternal life , only when we become spiritually fully "grown up", will we be able to see the completed eternal jigsaw.

Paul, in his famous, much quoted at weddings reading from Corinthians, says that it does not matter, what we **do**, if we speak in tongues, if we move mountains, if we give everything we have away..... it is of absolutely no use at all, we are wasting our time! **if we do not love have love....**

Christ's great commission to the apostles and to us, is to "go out and make disciples of all nations. If we don't, the church will die. We have to take risks, get out of the boat, and walk in places that are unfamiliar to us. To do that, as Alison said last week, there is the cost..... of maybe losing family, friends – who will not understand us.

But the up side is, that we all have God given gifts.

We may not have the gift of great oratory; we may not be able to counsel someone, we may not be able to make amazing cakes or jams for harvest festival, but we may be able to sit on the floor and tell stories to children. All gifts are equal in God's eyes. God loves every gift we offer.

We are all equally loved by God. God has no favourites. Jesus did not check if someone went to church or was a good person before he healed them. Jesus only question was "are you going to allow yourself to be touched by love?"

But, to love like this, as Jesus loves, makes us vulnerable. The word "vulnerable" comes from the Latin "Vulnera" – to wound. How wounded was our Saviour? How vulnerable was Jesus, to the machinations of Judas, and the Chief Priests?

Like Jesus, who was badly let down by his friend, people will let us down. We will be lied to. We will be ridiculed.

Are we willing to put ourselves at risk of being hurt.... wounded?

Christ didjust that.

.And.....

He was betrayed by someone he loved.

We are called to love as Jesus loved. And there are some pretty horrid people we are called upon to love. You don't have to like them. But often when we take time to talk to someone whom we do not feel automatically drawn to, a few smiles, gentle questions can break the ice and, who knows, you may find to have something in common.

Also, we, too, must not put up barriers around ourselves and don't *allow* others to come close. Every time we look at a stranger, someone alien to our particular environment, thinking or beliefs, just think "God loves that person as much as He loves me"

Maybe if you hold out your hand in love and friendship, you will be wounded.

But if you take the risk of loving, then maybe you will be surprised – the other person may add to, enhance your life, free you and*even love you!*"

Rohr – an eminent Christian Catholic Franciscan Theologian, who writes a daily meditation on the web - said something this week, that I think, needs to be passed on. He said, that it seems the work of the Spirit is to keep us vulnerable to life and love itself, and to resist all that destroys that Life. He said thatspirit led people (us) never stop growing and changing..... but then comes the hard bit..... we should never stop recognising the new moment of opportunity. we should never stop recognising the new moment of opportunity. and he goes on to say.....and here I quote directly.....

"How strange to think that so much of religion became worship of the status quo and a neurotic fear of failure." He goes on to say "It does make sense, though, when we consider that the ego hates and fears change and failure".

If we are vulnerable, then as a Paul Bell song says, we will be like supple trees than bend in the wind and when a violent storm comes, we will not snap in two.

How often do we, with determination, turn down opportunities for new worship, changing the furniture, to how we say prayer, how we sing, guitars versus organs..... is it because we are so afraid to step out of our comfort zone, step out of the boat.

God does not mind if we fail. Jesus did not mind failure – after all, in the world's opinion, he was a failure. What God hates is apathy – the status quo which may not be addressing the needs of those who are still far from Him.

Graham Nunn and Nancy (from China) have been with us for Hope 16, visiting schools and churches. Nancy was taken into Leamington a few days ago and she looked around her she noted that we have many churches and small congregations. In China, they have large congregations and no churches

Love is the key.....Surely, if we try to love as Jesus loved, then, there is nothing to fear. If we love one another – friends and foes, then we are revealing Jesus in this world...and ..**we will** build up the Body of Christ,..... until all of us (everyone) come to *the unity of faith*".

Week 6 : Sent out but never alone.

Readings: 1 Peter 13-25 and Luke 10:1-23

Preached by Revd Ann

At the end of every communion we're told "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord" and we answer "In the name of Christ Amen" And then what we usually do is stay around and chat and have coffee And of course that's a vital part of building a church community. Welcoming newcomers, sharing, growing in friendship, all that helps bring us closer together as the body of Christ is so important. But when we leave we can forget that we are sent out people, sent out in the name of Christ, sent out not just as individuals but as a church.

At a joint PCC meeting in Dorset we were asked to draw diagrams of church on a whiteboard. We started with a triangle with the vicar at the top but the vicar thought that too hierarchical so we changed to a circle of people facing the vicar in the centre but the facilitator pointed out that meant we had our backs to everyone outside the church – not inviting, and hadn't left space for them to come in. So we turned the people half round and had them stretching one welcoming hand toward the outside. But the facilitator pointed out we still had the vicar hemmed in as if he just served us in the church not those outside yet at his induction he was entrusted with the cure of souls in his parishes which meant all the souls not just churchgoers - such a huge huge task that he needed us to share it anyway - so perhaps he should be on the edge of the circle with us and also free to minister pastorally and spiritually where and how he believed God was calling him rather than being overburdened or constrained by the demands and expectations of church people. We never did get a satisfactory diagram – perhaps it's impossible - but it did make us think. How would you draw this church?

Archbishop William Temple said "The Church is an institution that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not its members." In other words our church isn't meant to function like a club or society for people with a common interest, run the way they want, organized for those who attend, where the focus is mainly inward. In his letter Peter calls his readers to look both Godward and outward. He reminds them of what God through Christ did for them, to build their trust in God and fuel their love for others.

Yet it's very easy, even if we are generous in our personal lives, to slide into being unconsciously selfish in church so that we focus inwardly on our wants and expectations – do we like the hymns, the liturgy, is the sermon boring, is the service too long rather than focusing on God and what the service is saying as whole about God as Father, as Jesus, as Holy spirit - and importantly what God might want of us. Our faith is cross-shaped or should be – shaped by Christ who came to be our way to God so that in God's love we reach out to each other.

The word Mass which we sometimes use for communion comes from the Latin word, "*Missa*." In the ending of the old service in Latin the people were dismissed with "*Ite, missaest*" (literally "Go, she—meaning the Church —has been sent"). If you celebrate Mass you celebrate coming to share in the body and blood of Christ, share in his redeeming, lifegiving love and sacrifice for us and to go out, sent to bring that love to others by what we are, by what we do by what we say.

Of course loving and supporting each other in the church is essential, it is or should be the primary characteristic of a church. Of course what happens in our services is important as we come together as a community to praise and worship God and meet with Jesus through the word through prayer through the sharing of bread and wine. That connection with God and each other is fundamental but what happens inside the church building, the church community is not an end in itself – it's to fuel what happens when we, as Christ's church, go out into the society around us.

Jesus called people to join him, know him, learn from him, become a group round him but as we heard today he didn't say just stay cosily together in your group - he sent them out on his behalf – out to bring healing and help, out to tell people - if they'd listen - about the kingdom of God. It's good that Nikki chose this passage about the 70 being sent out as it brings home that it's not just the leaders or special people who are sent out on Jesus behalf, but us all. All of us are sent out on Jesus' behalf, sent out as a church, in our different ways to use the different gifts and abilities God gives us to help make the good news of Jesus life-giving love a reality to people around.

You might think “That’s nothing new!” but what struck me is that there’s a difference in thinking of ourselves just as individuals responding to need, doing our best to live out our faith personally and in thinking of ourselves as doing it in the name of Christ as part of Christ’s family the church, commissioned by Christ - which is what we actually are. It seems an awesome responsibility but the great strength of realizing that we’re not sent out alone but as a church means that responsibility is shared.

*(Sermons in the two churches differed here Joint version continues at As the sent out followers.. *)*

Ladbroke version. Ladbroke is a great community and people in the church already reach out in all sorts of ways so perhaps part of our role may be to more strongly support pray for and encourage people who make connections between the church and the community and school the children go to and all involved in all the vital pastoral work and caring for each other in the village as well the interface between church and community in funerals, weddings baptisms.) So pray for them and each other and pray for yourselves to see what ways or what new ways God is calling you to love and reach out for Christ as individuals or with others. What’s crucial is for all of us to see reaching out not as something on the periphery of the church but as absolutely integral, central to what we are as a church.

Harbury version Our church already reaches out in all sorts of ways so perhaps part of our role may be to more strongly support pray for and encourage people in initiatives like Open the book, Little Saints, Bumps and Bundles and all who connect with the school and preschool, the pub meetings, the Bereavement Drop In meetings and so much more - and all the vital pastoral work and caring for each other in the village – as well the interface between church and community in funerals weddings baptisms. What’s important is for all of us to see these not as something on the periphery of the church but as absolutely integral, central to what we are as a church. So pray for all that’s going on and and pray for yourselves to see in what ways or what new ways God is calling you to love and reach out for Christ

*As the sent out followers of Christ we are called to be an outward looking church because the people out around us are on his heart.

And of course we never ever go out alone anyway because Christ's death and resurrection that we celebrate every communion means that as we go out in his name Jesus Christ goes with us. Wherever we go whatever we do he is already there. It is his work we are doing and so we can confidently ask for his guidance in how to take part in it with him and his wisdom, strength, courage, sensitivity, love and all the gifts we need to do it. We walk out in him and with him - which is why we can go in **peace** to love and serve the Lord.

..And a few words to finish:

We hope you have found this booklet helpful and fruitful. If you would like to discuss the content of any of the sermons in more detail please get in touch with the person who wrote it, contact details are given below.

If you would like to speak with one of us about making a commitment to become a disciple of Jesus Christ or wish to talk more about any aspect of discipleship and growing in faith, we would be pleased to hear from you and feel free to contact any of us to arrange a time to meet and discuss.

We are all on a journey of faith and we are all called to grow in faith every day, none of us has made it to the end of that journey, so we walk the road together sometimes supporting and guiding others and other times requiring support and guidance.

We pray God has blessed you through this booklet.

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