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Dear Friends

*I and sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves...  
cure the sick and say to them "the Kingdom of God has come near to you (Luke 10.3)*

Advent is weeks away, a further lockdown feels imminent but here in Radyr our local food hall is filled with hampers and gorgeous gifts inviting us all to get ready for Christmas. Our youngest is planning her Christmas list, it will be full of girly items that she doesn't need but wants very badly! Another has just celebrated her 19<sup>th</sup> birthday and, recognising that she has so much, could neither think what she wanted or needed. This week, Nike launched a £300 trainer that ties its own laces using blue tooth technology. I suspect many young people will want a pair but how many will need them is quite another matter.



As a youngster I loved shopping with my father to choose jewellery or clothes for mother. My parents adored each other and I remember so well their joy in both giving to and receiving from the other. I learned early in life that the gifts we give are tokens of our love for others. In recent months I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of local people who delivered food to the Rectory for families in need. This week I found a heavy bag filled with goodies on my doorstep. It contained tins, jars and bottles and at the bottom a recent receipt for £33.88 for expensive sparkling wine, grapes, mouth wash and other items not in the bag. Sadly, what initially seemed like a generous gift contained a haul of out of date items. There were numerous sauces, pickles, jams, beans and even a rusting can of gin and tonic; all but a handful said best by 2012, 2013, 2014 or 2017. As we emptied the contents into the food-bin and washed the tins and jars I thought of Luke's story,

*Jesus looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury;  
he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.  
He said, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them;  
for all of them have contributed out of their abundance,  
but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on*



This Sunday we celebrate the gospel medicine of Luke the Evangelist whose words and stories have the power to heal and save. Hot on the heels of sending out the 12, and also some further messengers, to go on ahead of him, Luke's Jesus, as he sets off towards Jerusalem, sends a further 70 (or 72 depending on which ancient text you read) out in pairs ahead of him. They are to go empty handed but with words of peace on their lips. Their mission is to be an extension of Jesus' own mission. To welcome the messengers is to welcome His message; to reject the messengers is to reject His message. Reception and acceptance brings salvation and healing, whilst rejection brings judgment. As we read Luke's gospel we discover that belonging to God's kingdom brings not religiosity but generous response. The travellers are to make a nuisance of themselves but to move on wiping the dust off their feet if they are not made welcome. There is an urgency in the message; don't dawdle says Jesus as he sends them out like lambs into a pack of wolves, "greet no one on the road". He is not asking them to be rude but saying that the harvest can only be reaped when it's ready and that the time is now, so there's no time to wait. They must "eat what is set before them", be gracious even if the food is not kosher. They are going to a place that may be welcoming but it may be hostile. This is ministry and this is mission and this telling of a joyful life-giving story is the vocation of all the baptised.

Scripture traces the story of human need and human longing and God's gift of God's very self to us. In the stories of the Hebrew bible, the life Jesus lives and the stories he tells, we encounter our own need to be loved, fed, included, cared for, accepted, welcomed and forgiven. We cry out to be healed and saved not just from others but from our own self. The biblical narrative brings us face to face with our own greed and our all too real longings for power and wealth at the expense of others. The ways we give and the ways we receive reflect so much about our priorities.

Next Sunday we will be celebrating our annual Gift Day. Some of you will already have received a letter from me but may I ask you now to prayerfully prepare for this. I hope that if you can you will be really generous this year. If we are to be God's people in the world, bringing salvation health and healing to others by proclaiming the message of the Kingdom of God, there's so much more we could do not just in topping up our shortfall in income but in reaching out in mission to our communities. Covid has taught us how to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. It has taught us how to feed them, care for them, deliver their medicines and shopping to them and alleviate their loneliness by calling them and writing to them. Covid has also taught us how to use technology to share the gospel. Sadly Covid is here to stay and, for many, this means that even when our churches are open they may not feel able to join us to worship. I would very much like to make it possible to live stream services in church going forward so that those who are too frail or who cannot come to services for health reasons can still feel part of their worshipping community when they are unable to attend in person. I know you will remember Jesus saying, "where your treasure is, there will be your heart also". You and I are the 72 sent out in mission today - let's work together to tell the world that "the Kingdom of God has come near"

The Collect, or prayer that collects up all our thoughts, for Luke the Evangelist whose feast day is tomorrow sums up what I've been trying to share with you,

*Almighty God, you called Luke the physician, whose praise is in the gospel,  
to be an evangelist and physician of the soul" by the grace of the Spirit  
and through the wholesome medicine of the gospel,  
give your Church the same love and power to heal through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord*

Gareth and I look forward to leading worship tomorrow in Radyr and St Fagans. Whilst we believe that our churches are as Covid safe as they can be, IF you feel safer worshipping from home wherever you live or normally worship do join the 10.30am service tomorrow on Zoom. Here are the log-on details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2148431624?pwd=VURKZHIER25tTHhtREpMM1VxOU1OUT09>

Meeting ID: 214 843 1624 Passcode: Radyr2019

**Yours in Christ,**

**Vicki**