

Simple Prayer, Simple Praise: A Worship Service for Sunday, June 14, 2020

Opening Acclamation: (Psalm 116:1; 16-17)

I love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication, because he has inclined his ear to me whenever I called upon him. I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.

A Reading from the Gospel According to Matthew 9:35-10:8

Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. [Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

"See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."

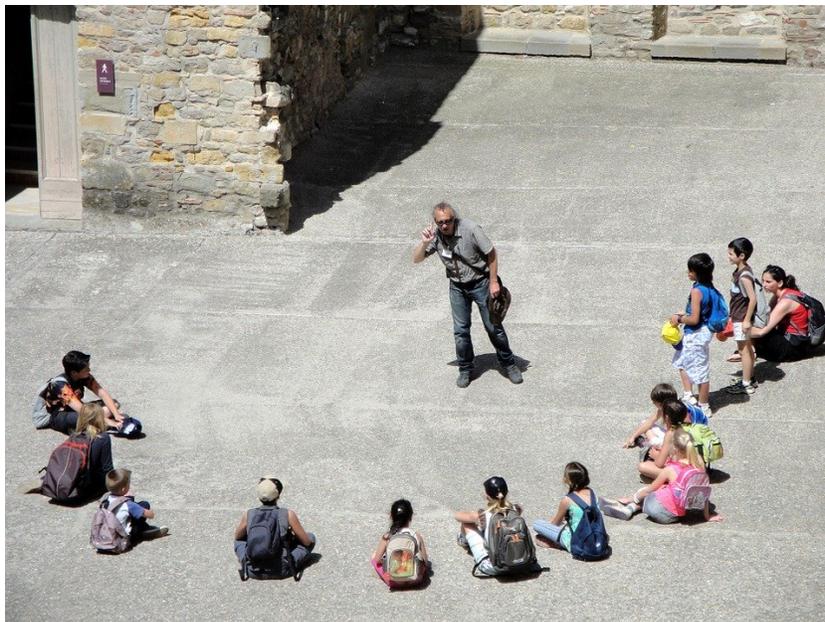
Meditation (by *The Rev. Shannon Collis, Trinity, Hamburg*)

When I'm feeling helpless at times many friends want to "fix" my situation. I may know the only fix there is—or not, but all I want is for them to just listen and hear my frustration. I want them to understand. Jesus understood the crowds he looked upon, and Matthew tells us he had *compassion* for them. All the Gospels agree at some point that Jesus looked upon the crowds with compassion. And why wouldn't he? They were his people, oppressed and impoverished; they were farmers, fisherman, and laborers. He understood their plight and the oppression they suffered under Roman rule.

Jesus did not feel sorry for them. Sympathy may be one element of compassion, but to have pity for them would have been to pity himself. Jesus helped them and he told his disciples to go out and help them as well. Jesus' compassion was not a passive feeling, but an active, even zealous, need to bring things right.

Matthew has Jesus telling his disciples to go only to the lost sheep of Israel. Though we know Matthew's gospel was aimed at Jewish Christians, we also know he did not agree with that statement. Perhaps he meant for the early church to put its own house in order first. But we know that in every Gospel Jesus went to all the towns and villages and ultimately commissioned the church to go to all the people of the earth. Jesus did not reserve the reign of God for a few, he understood and had compassion for the whole of humanity.

Recently, we have witnessed a lot of crowds. We have seen unrest and witnessed injustice. It is not enough to have pity, as Christians our compassion must be an active attempt to listen and to understand. We must not let the subtle forces of our culture quash our Christian responsibility to understand the crowds as Jesus does.



Prayer:

Almighty God, In your great compassion for all who are oppressed and denied justice, strengthen your servants so that we may be the hands, the feet, and the voice of Jesus in our communities; this we ask in Christ's name. Amen.

Raise your concerns in prayer using the words our Savior Christ taught us:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Grace:

*May God bless us all with the discomfort of watching injustice happen to others; so it may awaken our hearts to the reality and indignity of systemic oppression. May God bless us with the fury of civic protest stampeding across the land; so that our feet will be quickened to join our brothers and sisters demanding action. May God bless us with the sound of sirens, and bullhorns, and breaking glass; so that our voices too will be compelled to answer back crying out for justice for everyone—for where there is witness to the Gospel, there is the Risen Christ alongside us, **Amen.***



Each Sunday at 10 a.m., Bishop Sean and other leaders from WNY and NWPA will lead worship via the Zoom platform. Anyone can join the service via phone by calling **646-876-9923** use **code 127336938#**. Those wishing to join by instead of video can use this link: <https://zoom.us/j/127336938> If you are asked for a password, use **lakeerie**.

Simple Prayer, Simple Praise is produced for The Episcopal Dioceses of NWPA and WNY by the Rev. Steve Lane and the Rev. Claudia Scheda, and guest contributors as noted. June 2020.