

## **Address from Team Rector, Reverend Howard Robson Sunday, 19 July 2020**

Mark 6 v6b – 10 & 12 & 13.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thank you for your lovely welcome. Whilst in one sense today is a one-off, going around all the parishes in the group, in another way it isn't. That's because for Andrew, Annie and I, being visible across our Benefice is going to be a fact of ministry here.

The people who built this church did not do so in order that one day it would be old and thus evoke wonderful links with some barely imagined past; they built it to proclaim the Christian gospel and the building does just that by the way it is laid out. Even allowing for changes over the years, the cruciform shape, the position of the font and altars, high or nave, often the internal design of the roof to remind us of Noah and the ark navigating the waters of life (even the word nave which is derived from navigation), stained glass telling the stories of Jesus - many aspects of the building's design are intended to proclaim, speak of, the good news of Christ.

This building is a beacon on the landscape to the Gospel so it is entirely fitting that the people of God, you and I, use it in all our ministries and callings. We continue to proclaim that same Gospel. Prayer and worship have been made in this place for centuries and as we continue to do that, we, in the words of Lucy Winkett, give a voice to the dead. We validate their faith and witness in our commitment to all this building stands for.

And just as they then went into the world outside, so do we. Because of course the Gospel isn't just what happens in here; the Gospel is to be proclaimed out there too which is why I chose our reading from Mark. In various versions across the gospels, Jesus sent his disciples, soon to be his body the church, he sent them out to tell the good news of Him. And depending on the sources, it was to proclaim and/or to return to Him and tell him what they had found.

Jesus did not say go and stand on the side lines vaguely waving in the hope that someone will notice. His sending out is intentional and full of purpose. No extraneous baggage, you know, just in case; no checking round for the best stopovers, just proclaim the good news. And where he does say come back and tell me what you find, that tells us we are not abandoned in our, His, mission. It is a constant relationship whereby we are sustained by worship and prayer and enabled to go out to proclaim.

This summer saw the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my being ordained and throughout that time, I have been regularly encouraged by the number of opportunities there are to proclaim the Gospel. And it starts when the body of Christ, resourced from in here, goes out there.

There may or may not be a school in the parish or a shop or a pub and we may or may not feel up to physically being able to do all that much; but that's not the point. Perhaps we have a school – well how might we work with them? Perhaps we have a pub; how could we develop a link with them? I can always pray or I could talk with young people needing some encouragement – well, let's see how we might arrange that. Research has shown that young

people trust most those of their g/parents age. At wherever we live, in all communities there are people and it is with people that we, as the body of Christ, establish relationships in His name.

So, we meet today in this ancient building where prayer and worship has been offered for centuries and we remember the words: if the Lord's disciples keep silent, these stones would shout aloud. Well, we're not going to give the stones a chance to do that. It is my very great pleasure to be here as Team Rector and I am very much looking forward to partnering with you in ministry as the body of Christ in this place. Amen.