



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Trinity 3 2019 2019 11 am

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

In our Gospel reading this morningⁱ, St Luke tells us how Jesus sent out seventy of his followers in thirty five pairs to visit every town and place where he would follow on.

Jesus had already sent out the twelve disciples on a similar mission,ⁱⁱ and now he sends out a further, larger group echoing the seventy elders who shared with Moses the task of shaping the lives and the identity of the Hebrew peoples as they journeyed from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Landⁱⁱⁱ.

St Luke seems to be suggesting that the job of proclaiming the Gospel, the Good News of God's Kingdom, of building and shaping the Christian community, is not just up to the apostles, but that it is the calling of the whole people of God.

Well today, we recruit another four members to the community of faith and it will be their task, along with us and with all who have been baptised, to proclaim the Good News of God's Kingdom; to build and shape - not just Christian community - but the world; to engage in the God-given task of making the kingdoms of earth more like the Kingdom of Heaven.

St Luke does not tell us why Jesus sent out the seventy in twos, but perhaps he was underlining the fact that the seventy are sent out not just

to build community but to model community, to witness to others that they are part of a mutually supportive community of faith; that faith is not so much an individual solitary activity as a corporate one, one that has to be lived in partnership with others.

Today, Aiden, Iris, Grace and Olivia you not only become part of a world-wide community of faith, Jesus commissions you to build community and to proclaim God's Kingdom wherever you find yourselves. And to help you do this, God seals your faith with the Holy Spirit and provides you with a community to which you will belong wherever work, or family or leisure takes you.

To be a disciple means being with others, being part of a community, being open to receiving the love of others, offering love to others and, above all, being open to receiving God's generous, loving, forgiving, creative and sending love oneself, then modelling God's generous, loving, forgiving and creative love to others.

Jesus calls us into community, not just fellowship with one another, but into the heart of that perfect community of love we name Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the community from which the universe has been brought forth and to which it is returning.

Christ's Great Commission^{iv} to those who follow him is to "Go", to "Go, and make disciples, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." But it is not just a command to Go out, it is a command with a promise attached: the promise that Christ Jesus himself is with those whom he calls and sends - forever.

Today, Jesus promises to be with Aiden, Iris, Grace and Olivia – forever, as he leads them home ever deeper into his heart of divine love.

Aiden, Iris, Grace and Olivia, may your journey home be strengthened and supported by the community of faith we call "Church" – community into which, in a few minutes you will be baptised; may you proclaim,

with all who have been baptised, God's Kingdom, may you know the strengthening power and grace of God's love, and may you draw others through into God's love through your generous, loving, forgiving and creative love.

Travel light! Take nothing with you except your redeemed humanity, and an ability to articulate the reason for the hope that will lie within you as your faith grows and deepens and continues to shape you.

Wherever you find yourselves, take Christ's gift of peace with you; if you do nothing more than that, you will be building God's Kingdom.

And remember, the key to everything, as Jesus pointed out to those whom he first sent out in his name, is to remember that the Kingdom of God is at hand. It is right here, right now. It is not something that will happen in the future, but something available now and to everyone and you, with us and the whole Church have the opportunity, the privilege and the joy of carrying that message.

Aiden, Iris, Grace and Olivia, today you become a new creation; God entrusts you to proclaim the words of life – the only words that can help bring meaning not only to your lives, but to all life here on earth as God draws us into the eternal life of heaven!

Amen.

ⁱ Luke 10.1ff

ⁱⁱ Luke 9.16

ⁱⁱⁱ Numbers 11.16-17

^{iv} Matthew 28.18-20