

Sermon for Wednesday 28th September 2016

Psalm 85: 8-13

Luke 9: 57-62

The scene in today's Gospel happens immediately before Jesus sends out 72 disciples to spread the good news in towns and villages. 'Heal those who are ill and tell them', Jesus says, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.' And there are instructions too about what they should, and shouldn't, take: 'Do not take a purse or bag or sandals.' There are also instructions on what to say if they are rejected by those who they meet.

It's a tough call. It's *not* for the feeble, *not* those who need to have things with them that give them security – money, a bag. *Not* for those, either, who need comfort – who would rather not go bare footed! I have to say I can't imagine being up to the task!

It's a tough call, so is it any wonder that Jesus asks those who would follow him whether they're really up to it? In our Gospel reading we heard his encounters with three would-be followers. The first says he will follow Jesus wherever he goes. But Jesus warns him that there will be nowhere comfortable for him to rest. The second and the third both tell Jesus that there are family commitments they need to attend to, and then, yes, they will follow him. But again, Jesus makes the cost of following him clear – the *Kingdom of God* is the priority, *none* of our earthly ties come close.

It is tough, and I'm sure many of us wonder about what appears to be Jesus' lack of compassion. But I think Jesus is simply stating the facts. This is *his* life, with none of the comfort and security of a safe place to stay, and where family commitments cannot take priority. Whoever would follow him needs to understand that. There is – as there was in our Gospel reading on Sunday about the Rich Man and Lazarus – a sense of urgency about working for the Kingdom. It is not something for another day; it is not something to be put off until a more convenient time.

Because this is a Kingdom where all our prayers for peace, mercy, health, and justice will be answered. In our reading from Psalm 85 we heard these words: 'God promises peace to his people, his faithful servants.'

But this is not the superficial peace of one who has nothing to worry about, one who has a comfortable life. This is the peace that passes *all* understanding, that doesn't make sense in worldly terms. It is *God's* peace that is promised, a constant amid trouble, hardship, ill-health and persecution. In God's Kingdom we heard that 'Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.' This is the Kingdom for which we are made, and for which we are called to work for. So let's not delay. How do you want to serve God's Kingdom today?