

Today's Gospel reading speaks of some uncomfortable realities.

*(Matthew 10.24-39)*

*Jesus summoned the twelve and sent them out with the following instruction:*

You are to be like me – behave like me:

- speak out the truth
- do not be afraid of others (and don't be surprised if you are called names and misjudged like I am)
- if you must fear, be afraid or wary of being led down the slippery slope that leads to hell and destruction
- keep your eyes on the One who notices when a sparrow alights on a tree and who knows you intimately – even down to the number of hairs on your head
- recognise what your choices say about your priorities

Jesus sent the 12 out into the Judean countryside with these instructions – instructions for a particular purpose. These men were new to being disciples of Jesus and were learning how to be the people of God in a new age or era.

We too face the task of being the people of God in a new age or era. Church is not going back to being what we might consider normal for a long time – if it ever does. What do Jesus' words to his disciples say to us then?

### **Speak out the truth**

It is difficult to always know what is true in this age of false news - we need to make sure that what we say is true, not just repeating hearsay. If we see or hear an opinion stated as truth, that could be looked at differently – perhaps we could offer an alternative view?

If we enjoy a good gossip we need to be sure: that what is being said is true (or indeed the whole truth), would we say it if the person was present or if we remembered that God is here part of our conversation?

A prophet is one who sees what is really happening in the world or nation and tells it as it is – in an era of spin perhaps we need to be prophetic!

### **Do not be afraid of others**

Are there people you might be afraid of speaking truth to? The first disciples must have been as terrified as we often are of speaking about Jesus – do not be afraid of others says Jesus to his disciples.

Sometimes they had to just leave people be because they didn't want to know, we need to be praying that God will open our eyes to see those who are spiritually hungry, and not be afraid to tell our story about our journey of faith with Jesus, if people aren't interested that is ok, we can leave it be.

### **If we must be afraid, be afraid of the right stuff**

Jesus says: The evil one leads folk gently down the slippery slope to hell and destruction – not by major acts of wickedness but by allowing us to convince ourselves that our little acts of nastiness or unkindness don't really matter, or are not really nasty or unkind.

The Jewish leaders convinced themselves that murdering Jesus was the only way to keep their country safe. We cannot achieve good ends by means of bad and Jesus did not fight evil with evil either.

### **Keep your eyes on God**

We don't need to navel gaze and worry that we might inadvertently be sliding down the slippery slopes to hell. We need to be keeping our eyes on the One who knows this world intimately because they created it because they loved it.

God made you because God wanted to have a loving relationship with you. God has done all that is necessary to ensure that you cannot drift away from God's love unless you chose to do so.

### **Recognise what your choices say about your priorities**

If we find ourselves in a position where we are having to choose between someone or something and our relationship with God we need to recognise that although we may not want to be without that someone or something, without God nothing else is actually worthwhile.

It is only when we let go of our desire to control our lives and place all aspects of our life into God's good keeping that we discover that the life we thought was *living* was merely a shadow and ashes compared to the life God wants for each of us.

Jesus says: Whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.