

**The Revd Stan Evans**

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ANGLICAN PARISH  
ST. LAURENCE IN LANZAROTE

## SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18<sup>TH</sup> 2020 - SERMON

*I pray for God's grace to bring you these words in the name of the risen Christ - Amen*

On this feast day of St. Luke, we celebrate his life and witness – an evangelist, and as someone who presents Christ in ways that can be understood in the language of the people, whether word or image, as someone who gives healing a proper place in ministry, as a friend of the poor and sick, the marginalized and the stereotyped, as someone who, in all of his travels, remains faithful until death to the ministry he is called to and charged with. Luke is at the very heart of the seventy-two who were sent out – not one of the twelve – and it is from his Gospel we draw strength today.

In our Gospel - Jesus begins his journey to Jerusalem - his disciples are sent ahead of him to prepare for his arrival. Their commission is to bring God's peace; they have no time to waste on anything which hinders that task.

Many stories of adventure begin because someone is dissatisfied with life.

Whatever the hero is looking for, he knows that it is not where he is. Here is not enough.

That puts where he lives under question. If someone tells you to seek for justice, the presumption is that justice is not here now. The seeker has to make a choice: does he stay where he is and learn to live with his dissatisfaction, or does he leave home and search for what he hopes to find?

If he stays, he will be incomplete, but if he goes, he risks losing everything he has.

That conflict is important because without it, many people would never start off!

Being dissatisfied can be a very constructive experience: it can move people to seek for what is best.

Often when our hero leaves home he is poorly prepared for his journey. The temptation is to take everything he can carry – including a parachute, just in case he has a spectacular fall!

But if he takes everything he has, he will discover only what he has already known.

Dorothee Soelle puts it well when she writes:

*He who takes the most with him and leaves little behind, and therefore remains much the same as he was before, has less chance of finding what he seeks... He who does not give up anything cannot find anything... To find what is sought requires the complete renunciation of this world; compromise brings destruction.*

That radical challenge, to leave behind the guarantee of shelter and support and set off without provisions, is one which rings out in today's Gospel. And Jesus believes that his disciples can take that risk for the sake of the kingdom of God. It certainly rings out for me as your Chaplain – for just eighteen months ago – we faced that same challenge.

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When Jesus sends out the seventy-two you might wonder how ready they are for the demanding task ahead of them. There is a picture of Jesus who must trust his followers if his outreach is going to be extended. He has to organise a movement because he doesn't have all the time in the world.

Jesus must depend on the various talents of his followers; he must depend on their understanding and their resolve to get it right.

Perhaps if we were in charge of that first outing, the seventy-two would still be waiting to make the jump! There is a clear urgency about the task: Jesus says, "*Go, and make disciples.*"

As he gives his missionary instruction, Jesus seems under no illusion about the territory: compared to the wolves roaming around, his own crowd are like lambs.

He charges them to lead the radical lifestyle of the wandering preacher who must face homelessness and renunciation of family. They are not to be encumbered by extras nor to be delayed by roadside chats and gossip. When they enter a house they should bless it with peace, and if they are welcomed, they should not try to adjust the menu: all that takes time!

To tell a group of Jews travelling in foreign territory that "*you must eat and drink what is set before you*" is a radical demand indeed. In all this Jesus tells his disciples that they must depend on the PEACE they bring, the peace of the kingdom.

If they have no money, they cannot stay at the local inn when people reject them; they must travel on until they are made welcome. They depend on the peace they bring, and they depend on the hospitality of the strangers who receive them. They have something to offer the people in their teaching and healing; in return for that work, the people have something to offer the disciples in welcoming them.

Hospitality, therefore, is not just a social virtue: it is a response to the word of God which seeks to enter. So inhospitality to the disciples is a rejection of the Word of God.

A dear friend this week spelt this out for me – for sadly even after committing everything to the task here – yes, there is still inhospitality, a determination to destroy all that is good and fruitful – and he said – it is God's word that they are rejecting, not you.

So shake the dust from your feet and move on. But after enduring everything – constructive dissatisfaction is not an issue – I believe that good will prevail – and all will be to the Glory of God.

Sometimes it can all get too much. Then suddenly, something wonderful happens when a message comes through – timed to perfection.

This morning was one such occasion – *Word for Today* reading and message was forwarded by a friend knowing that I have been struggling.

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*'Your mind can work for you or against you. When it works for you, it helps you to stay positive, reach your goals, and enjoy each day. But when it works against you, it can make you negative and discouraged. So teach your mind to work for you instead of against you. An important way to do this is to make an intentional decision that you'll begin to think positively – in terms of faith and not fear. Be determined that with diligence and God's help your brain will go to work and be a positive force in your life.'*

Our joy here is that in March of this year we made that positive decision that this wretched virus would not overcome us. We now have a two tier Church and a global congregation that look to us week by week to bring the sacrament of the Word and that of the Eucharist into their living rooms. Folk who are overcome with the joy of receiving both – no religious labels – no negativity – no gossip or cliques – just the joy that the real Word is their real resource for mission – sustaining them through all that this world can throw at us – What reward is that?

We are God's people, and each one of us is called to the task of proclaiming the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour here in this place and to a world so desperately in need of his healing power.

***Amen***