

Sermons at the Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Preached by Rev. Geoff Read on Sunday 20th October 2019

3-D Church (2): “Out”

When I was a child, I was given a toy. I never knew what it was called and I still have no idea, but it was something like this and it was amazing!

It was like a pair of plastic binoculars you looked into

It had a cardboard disk with small pieces of film with pictures around the edge

You pulled a lever downwards to rotate the disk and move between each of the images

And it was amazing – it made things seem intensely vivid, 3-d, with amazing depth

If you had one too, and know what it was called, tell me afterwards

As people met with Jesus, it was like encountering life with an amazing 3-D intensity

As we heard last week, a writer called Robert Warren puts it like this

“God’s way of being fully human has been demonstrated in the life of Jesus Christ ...” – as the One who is fully God and fully Man Jesus brought a new depth and a new perspective to how people experienced the love of God

In his teaching, in his actions and in his very self

And in our gospel reading today, we see how Jesus drew others into His work of enabling people to experience the love of God in this way

70 or 72 are sent out, one for each of the original nations created in Genesis 10, a sign of the way that God’s love is for all people

And he sends them to bless – to go and say “Peace to this house” – and to show what that peace feels like as they heal and proclaim that the Kingdom is “come near” to them

Why near: because they are to go to the places Jesus himself is Himself about to go (v1c)

The full quote from Robert Warren is this:

“God’s way of being fully human has been demonstrated in the life of Jesus Christ, is available to all by the work of the Holy Spirit, and is currently being demonstrated in your nearest local church.”

Robert Warren, *Being human being Church*

Just like the 70, Church is to be the place where the 3-D love of God is not just an intellectual idea, a set of moral rules, and a Jesus who is just a fond example from the past, but where His love is real, seen and experienced, as it impacts and moulds our lives, attracting others in turn to be touched by that love too

Robert Warren calls this 3-D Church with an “In, an Up and an Out dimension – community, prayer and worship, and engaging in God’s loving purposes in the world aka mission

We need all three dimensions, he says, for there to be a healthy, balanced, growing church life

In this sermon series we are exploring each of the 3-dimensions – last week we looked at In, next week we will look at Up and this week I want to talk about Out

If you have a Bible take a look with me at Luke 10

In sending out his 70 followers to demonstrate this 3-D love, note first that it's the Jesus the Lord who takes the initiative (v1a)

It's the Lord's harvest, He is the one who has made all the growth happen (v2b)

And it is the Lord who sends the labourers (v2c)

- "I am sending you..." (vv3)
- I will give you a message ("Peace")
- And I will give you power in my name to heal

All of which adds up to what Jesus calls the Kingdom of God or the good and loving rule of God coming near, good news for the whole person, whole households and whole communities

And the disciples' part?

He likens them to people working in a field at harvest time, something that has to happen at the right time – you can't harvest too soon or too late, it's recognising the moment in a process that has been long underway

- they are to go in pairs, not alone
- and they go to look for the men and women of peace, who like them, welcome them, say yes to them
- to pray to the one who owns the harvest for enough people to do the Out work
- they are to both act and speak
- and they are to trust the Lord of the harvest for the outcome

The act and speak bit is really important – as people experience the love of God it is the calling of the Church to also name that love as coming from God and invite people to respond – that's all the word "evangelism" mean

And this is all mission or the "Out" dimension is: joining in with God's loving purposes for the world by actions and words

Last week I explained that our Church Council started to ask the questions: what is God calling us to be and do as a Church, what is the Lord calling us to join in with?

We are using a planning tool called Mission Action Planning or MAP, used by lots of other Anglican churches

It's a simple cycle of looking at what is, prayerfully asking what could be, setting simple goals to work towards, then having a go, before then repeating that cycle

In MAP we have found it helpful to think about our Church life as In, Up and Out

Then, after prayer and discussion, we set a simple Big Goal for each to work on for the coming 12 to 18 months – some will weave into what we are already doing, others may need new initiatives

Last week I explained the goal for In, our life as community

This is the one we agreed for Out

And it's simply this:

- **Out** (outward mission): developing an intentional culture and practices of Invitation and of Welcome of people to church services (seasonal) and church events and then into the life of our Church

And in order to turn good intentions into action we would like to do this:

- Suggest to you the natural opportunities we have to invite someone to something many people would really enjoy doing – singing carols at Christmas - and to give attractive postcards to use in inviting

And to support each other – the two by two bit – in praying for and encouraging each other as we do so

- Inviting is not knocking on doors
- Inviting is not walking up to complete strangers in the street
- Inviting starts with inviting or asking God's blessing on the men and women and children of peace you already know – praying for them, loving them - and leaving the outcome of that love to the Lord of the harvest

The inviting to an event may be way down the road. The starting point is to ask the Lord who is the man or person of peace is He is calling you to love

And then to choose to bless that person by loving prayer and actions towards them (an invitation to a coffee, asking how they are), and so simply to be a channel of God's love to them

That is all our part is: to act and speak the love of God to our person of peace – it is the Lord who then brings about a harvest

So, I wonder: who is that person of peace for you?

In a moment of quiet prayer, hold that question before God.

And as a person starts to emerge invite God to bless them in the way that is just right for them at this time

And then do that every day

And be looking for ways to be the channel of that blessing to them

There is a summary of our MAP process and our 3 Big Goals downstairs in the "Come and Find Out More" Fair, ask a Council member for one