Luke 10.1-9, Patronal Service St Luke Modbury

Good morning, it's wonderful to be here with you today for this service and celebration of the patronal festival of this parish dedicated to St Luke

And to be speaking about the call of our Lord for labourers to go out into the mission field

A call that goes out to Christians in every generation as it does to we who hear and respond to the gospel this day

The reading from Luke ch 10 began describes the mission of the 72 – sent out by Jesus in his name

Only St Luke, in his Gospel, describes the mission of the 72 in this way and uses the number 72

Though all of the gospels describe Jesus sending his disciples

And those who will come after them

Out in to the mission field

St Matthew, in his gospel, uses the language of the harvest and the labourers in the same way as St Luke does here

So we read

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

And this is the sentence within our reading that really stands out and resonates with us still today

Because we know the harvest is still plentiful

And we know also that the labourers are few

So our prayer is the same prayer as that within our Gospel reading

"therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

We are observing this patronal festival of St Luke a week early

The observance is actually 18 October – next Sunday

And the reason for moving the observance – or transferring it

Is the small matter of the annual meeting of the diocesan Synod occurring next weekend

And that has consumed quite a bit of my time in thinking, praying and preparing the past week

As President of the Synod I give an address – sometimes called a 'charge' – to the members of Synod on the first day – setting out the priorities for us as we convene and the vision I want to set before the Diocese

In that address I write this (and you are hearing a sneak preview here)

"Fostering vocations, both to lay and ordained ministry, is critical, and has been for some time – not only in our Diocese but across the national church. Leadership is everywhere crucial to vision. It may be the case that we have the financial resources to fund the ministries we need, and it may that we have the property assets needed for those ministries – but if we do not have the leaders and the leadership required to make it happen, it will not happen."

Essentially it's the same prayer as that our Lord exhorts us to pray in the Gospel reading for today

"therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

So that brings us to the harvest – which is the mission field

And then – importantly - to the labourers – who are the disciples

And the sending out, by Jesus, of the labourers into that harvest

The charge or address Jesus gives to the labourers as they go out into the mission-field is not all that encouraging at first

v3, "Go on your way; I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves."

This indicates it will not be easy

Further they are not to take much along with them for the journey

"Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, and greet no one on the road."

But are to rely on the hospitality of strangers

"Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' [6] And if a person of peace is there, your peace will rest on that person, but if not, it will return to you. [7] Remain in the

same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house."

This may seem culturally very strange to us

but in the culture of the time the giving and receiving of hospitality was a very important social value and expectation

if a traveller came to you – even a stranger – there was a social expectation that hospitality would be offered

the exhortation in the Letter to the Hebrews comes to mind

13.2, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it."

Finally – the object of the mission and of the sending out of the 72

It is to proclaim the coming of the good news about Jesus

So we read the instruction of Jesus to those being sent out is this:

"Say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'"

At the very beginning of Mark's Gospel the whole mission of Jesus is summed up in the same words

From Mark ch. 1

"Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

In the same way as the 72 are sent out by Jesus into the mission field

Like labourers going out in the fields that are ripened and ready for the harvest

So we are sent out

And so we embark on a journey

Into the mission field

As missioners

And as labourers for the gospel

We are to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God

If you set out on a journey –

you need to where you are going, how you are going to get there

You may very well need to have a guide

You don't want me to your guide on a journey or to give you direction

I'm notorious in our family for having a very bad sense of direction – you can ask Karen about that afterwards if you like

he often marvels at how patently I get it wrong, but how confident I am in going the wrong way

even with the GPS I can still take wrong turns

in our spiritual life and our life of faith

as followers of Jesus

we also need a guide

to help us along the way

and to guide us back to the right path if we do go the wrong way

and of course for Christians that guide is a person

the person of Jesus Christ

the very one who brings near the Kingdom of God

out role as disciples and followers of Jesus is actually quite simply

it is simply to point others to him – to Jesus

in our words

and also in our deeds

that the reality of the living God might be made known in our communities

our mission field

we do not go out into this mission-field alone

at the end of St Matthew's Gospel Jesus sends the disciples out again, saying to them

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit [20] and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

And then gives them this promise

“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This same sending out

Often described as the “great commission”

Comes to each of us who are the disciples of Jesus and the baptised people of God this day

And so also does this same promise and assurance

“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The disciples did not go out into the mission field alone

In Luke 10 they go out two by two

In the great commission Jesus assures them

And we who hear his words today

He is with us – by his Spirit

The unseen companion walking alongside us

The unseen power giving the right words for the right moment

We are here today on this patronal festival dedicated to St Luke

and every Sunday

because we have known the faith of Jesus and put out trust in him

And have sought to follow the way of Jesus

To go out into the mission field

Our calling is not only to follow the way of Jesus in our own lives

But to make this known to others around us

Together we do this as God’s people in this place

As members of this community of Modbury and golden Grove

And of the people of God int this place coming together as one this day

And so, in accordance with the sending out of the labourers into the mission field

And in the power of the Spirit

And the witness of St Luke the beloved physician and companion to the apostle Paul

Let us be ready to be sent out also

Into the mission field all a0rudn us

Ready to proclaim the gospel of our Lord in words and in deeds

To all who will listen and receive it

For good reason do we pray together as we conclude our gathering for worship

As we will this day

“Send us out in the power of your Spirit

To live and work to your praise and glory”

The Lord be with you