

Saturday 3rd December 2022

Reading 1, Isaiah 30: 19-21, 23-26; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 146: 1-6;

Gospel, Matthew 9: 35-10:1, 6-8

The first reading encourages the people of Zion to weep no more, reassuring them that God will answer when he hears the cry of the people. He says, 'This is the way, follow it' and then a perfect, idyllic life is described as the Lord 'dresses the wounds of his people.'

However, in the gospel, Jesus feels sorry for the crowds. The promised life of peace and harmony hasn't been realised and the people are like sheep without a shepherd, not because God hasn't kept his word but because they chose not to follow the way He had shown them. Jesus asks for labourers to work in the rich harvest and sends the disciples out to proclaim the kingdom of heaven, reminding them that they should give freely, just as they had received freely.

When we find it hard to follow God's way, we know that Jesus is the Way, and we can follow Him. By coming into the world, Jesus shared our weaknesses and vulnerabilities and overcame them. Trusting in Him, we are helped to do the same and then we can respond to the call to work in the harvest.

The disciples were told to 'Cure the sick and raise the dead.' If we are to work in the harvest, what can we do to proclaim God's kingdom? In Isaiah, if people followed God's way, humanity, nature, and creation would work in harmony, producing bread that was rich and nourishing. At this time of year, we, like sheep without a shepherd, are encouraged to satisfy our needs with conspicuous consumption, to buy more, use more, consume more. Can we proclaim God's kingdom by heeding Pope Francis's exhortation to live simply, to hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor?

As we prepare to celebrate Jesus's coming, can we also consider the effects of our celebrations on the planet and on the marginalised yet still be filled with joy because the gift of Jesus was given 'without charge.' Let's pray for the courage to share that gift as freely as we have received it.



Reflection written by: Janet Wallbank, St Teresa's, Newcastle upon Tyne