

MU 140th Anniversary Assembly:

Homily on Luke

I chose this gospel - because it makes me uncomfortable - and because it excites me.

because it is about mission

and well - we ARE the largest lay mission organisation in the Anglican Communion.

I love it because it is about faith in action -
our theme for the coming year.

We ALL want our faith to make a difference -

And we have heard, this afternoon, just a few of the amazing projects Mothers Union branches have developed and become really effective at that.

But some of us are not so confident - and although we can see a need, we find it hard to believe we could possibly have anything that might make a difference.

Well, I have good news for you - this gospel shows that we can all make a difference simply by who we are.

And that being WITH people can itself make a real difference.

And let me tell you where that comes from.

At the beginning of Matthew's gospel Jesus' birth is announced as Emmanuel - God-with-us?

At the end of his gospel, Matthew tells us Jesus said
"Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"

And here, in Luke 10, the disciples are sent it in pairs -
With one another - never alone -
and taking nothing with them,
to every town and place where He himself intended to go.

Or, as the King James version has it - before His face to every
town and place where he intended to go.

Since the resurrection -
and the road to Emmaus -
He comes behind us, after us as He does here -
He travels with us -
and He is already there before us.

They are sent out WITH each other, to be WITH others.
And they are to receive hospitality -

before they heal and preach.

For a very good reason - which is that they too will be changed as they do that.

So this is my "dreaming gospel"

The gospel that makes me want to say, with Martin Luther King, "I have a dream!"

I dream of a Church where we always think of doing things together - in partnership - lay and ordained, male and female, poor and rich - the contribution of the young valued as much as that of the old.

I dream of a Church where when we look at each other, we expect to find - the light and the glory we see in the face of Jesus Christ - IN one another - and - in our midst - however much we might disagree.

I dream of a Church which is more of a movement than an institution.

A movement of People who when,
like these disciples, have left everything behind, or when they
think they have nothing -
realise that God has provided all we need from His abundance
- which is all around us.

A people who, every day trust that God is always working for
good in this world - however bad things seem.

A people whose eyes are wide open.
Not screwed up - tight shut - flinching in fear.

The fields are white for Harvest.
The grain is dry, sun bleached and ready to drop.

People out there, all around us - are more ready to hear the
gospel today than have been over the past forty years.

But they won't listen just because we are the Church.
Because we behave as the always right, privileged, established
Church.

This gospel turns all of that on its head.

This is how things should always have been if they'd been the right way round.

In John 10:10, Jesus says, "I have come that you may have life; life in abundance, life in all its fullness".

I dream of a Church where we want that for everyone. Irrespective of their race, or their colour, or their social background, or gender or sexuality.

And I dream of a Mothers' Union which is ready. Really ready.

Spiritually ready, to seize opportunities - to put our faith into action.

To receive as well as give.

A Mother's Union which is every priest and bishop's first thought if they want something Missional done.

Let's make this year really count - by trusting God more and finding lovely, human, simple ways to be WITH people.

