

2 Kings 5: 1-14

Psalm 30

Galatians 6: 1- 18

Luke 10:1-24

These sermon notes were prepared before the sermon was delivered and so do not transcribe the actual sermon word for word

"*The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.*" The classic sermon for this text has the priest urging the congregation to give more; more of their time, more of their talents and more of their wealth in order to accomplish the work of the Church. It is an almost unnecessary sermon as we already appreciate that if we did give more then we could achieve more.

Although such a sermon may well be preached in many churches today it is both flawed and it also fails to acknowledge where we ourselves are at.

The primary flaw is, that as the priest encourages the congregation so the true theology of the text is distorted. As the priest encourages the congregation, so the priest takes on the role of Christ in the gospel narrative, and at the same time the role of disciple is assigned to those in the pews.

Shortly in the liturgy we will claim for ourselves that "We are the body of Christ"; now whether that is an actual reality or a desire to be realised, it does change our encounter with the gospel text.

As the 'Body of Christ' it is WE who see that "*The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few*"; and our ability to 'see' is quite probably related to how engaged and attentive we are to our being part of the 'body'.

Overall however, I think we can confidently conclude that the "Body of Christ" being realised here at St. Paul's does see that that "*The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few*"; it is not an insight of priestly wisdom, it is our common insight.

It is an insight that holds a truth for our community as 'Church', and some will also see that same truth in relation to our own growth and development into our Christ-likeness. It can further be applied in our workplaces, our families and in every harvest that we share in.

So, WE, as community see ourselves in the narrative of the gospel text, it is WE, not the priest that recognises the potential. As we follow that narrative we see that we are to send out labourers into the harvest, we are to send "*them on ahead*" to realise where we intend to go.

This gospel narrative provides a delightful parallel for us in the activity of the past couple of weeks.

At our AGM, we, as the 'body' gathered to consider the harvest, and the associated labour. We also acknowledged our Church Council, the 'appointed' ones, those we send "*on ahead*" to discern and to labour in order to realise all that we seek and establish that place where we intend to go.

On Thursday last, our appointed ones met to consider their responsibilities as they set forth to labour and bring about a fruitful harvest; and there was a delightful energy, mirroring the movement and direction that is evident in the gospel narrative.

Looking at the gospel today, what's missing is location, it begins with "after this", but we are not given clues to know after 'what'; and although they are sent on ahead to every town and place, we have no clues in today's narrative that tell us from where were they sent.

So last Thursday our appointed ones determined our starting point, we considered and discerned 'where we are at'; and that was done taking into account the feedback from the AGM.

The vision of "A New Creation" that we took into the AGM, is still very much a vision, a perception of the harvest into which we're going; however our starting point is more clear; and so we have changed our planned budget to reflect the current commitment in terms of our 'giving'.

There is something quite affirming to see our community life paralleled in the gospel, to see ourselves living in the liturgy of the Church, for the "Word" of God, is our very creation.

I want to leave the delightful parallel that's unfolding with the gospel, and hope to give a clearer picture of our going into the harvest next week. There are however some further reflections for us in the other readings that pick up the themes of 'harvest' and 'labouring', or abundance and activity, or wealth and what we do all of which illuminate for us the Divine agenda in creation.

In the first reading "*Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram*" and "*the king of Israel*" represent the well off, those with power and those who are able to do what they want. As we follow the text, the story given for our enlightenment, we see they are attributed with disease and fear.

As an aside, and grounding that biblical attribution, we often find in the Scriptures, both Old Testament and New Testament, that the leaders are not the smartest and although they think they are the ones leading the way, they are so often seen as completely incompetent and only concerned with their own position. This biblical illumination is becoming more evident, and appreciated by more people, as we watch the unfolding of Australian political governance,

By way of contrast, the "*young girl captive from the land of Israel*", who "*served Naaman's wife*" and likewise Naaman's own servants, represent those who have little and who do not have the freedom, financially, socially or potentially, to do what they want; their place is to serve others.

And as we follow the story from their perspective, it becomes clear that it is not the seemingly powerful, but the servant who can restore, heal and give life to others. In the servants orientation of 'giving' the life and revelation of Christ is made real; and the very activity of God to create, redeem, restore and heal is made real as life's truest power and is in the hands of those who give and serve,

Our church council, our appointed ones, give of themselves to serve the Church and to serve this community.

It is delightful to find ourselves in the bible; to see our community life paralleled in the readings living in the liturgy of the Church, and Sunday by Sunday we gather in Eucharist to give thanks for the “Word” of God, and for the reality that we are ‘The Body of Christ’.

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

Jesus said;
*I have given you authority
and nothing will hurt you*

The author of life has gifted us that same authority, the authority of Christ.

*'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'
rejoice that your names are written in heaven*

In making Eucharist we echo the psalm
O Lord my God, I will give you thanks for ever.

And Paul reminds the Church
Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. 8 If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. 9 So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up.

In the silence of prayer we hear the Divine voice..
"Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! 24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it."

"Blessed are the eyes that see what you see!"

Peace be with You