**28th June Holy Communion Psalm 89:8-18, Matthew 10: 24-39**

May I speak in the name of the Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen

How has your Lockdown experience been? Have you found it strange to have gone through the festivals of Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension Day and Pentecost without gathering together in this building? I know that in a way, I have felt that we have still been going through Lent, that annual journey of drawing aside, going without and questioning – only this year it has gone on for three months!

Have you felt God speaking to you over the time? Has it been easier to hear him without all the trappings of groups and meetings? What has he been saying to you?

Alex Brown’s reflective poem, read by Steve just now, was based on the Gospel reading we had this morning and is about God whispering to him as he comes out of this time of Lockdown.

I wonder what we can learn for ourselves from this passage and what that message is for us too.

Matthew talks about the Disciples learning to imitate their Master, Jesus. This is a much deeper concept than just being like him in what they say and do but also in what they will experience as they go out in mission with his message.

Just as Jesus did, they would experience rejection, suffering and for some across the centuries, even today their is martyrdom.

This passage is the second part of his instructions to the twelve. The earlier verses of this chapter focussed on more practical aspects of their mission journeys whereas this second part gives them encouragement and hope as they step out but warns of some of the severe conditions they will experience.

There is very much a sense of the Master and the apprentice in this passage, of us being inducted into a way of life by imitating or copying Jesus.

A life of discipleship demands a paralleled intensity in the bond or relationship we have with Christ. To be a disciple we must know and love the master.

Mission is not something that we can just tag on to our church life or Christian lifestyle. That is not what this passage is saying. Discipleship cannot just be part of our life; it must be all of it.

To be a faithful witness, we need to have experienced such an intensity of a relationship with Christ that we cannot help but show him in our lives and draw people to him. Our lives should show the Holy Spirit working within us.

We are warned that mission will not be easy and that sharing the message of God can cause division and suffering but we are loved and valued, and God is with us. He promises us care, hope and sustenance all along the way.

Last week, in my reflection, I thought of us standing as a church community at the top of a mountain, as the children of Israel did at the end of their 40 years in the wilderness. Standing ready to step out as God leads us forward in a new way, to the land he has prepared for us. The way may not be easy, we may have problems that bring us pain and sorrow but we move forward as Disciples of Christ, guided by him and in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

Alex’s reflective poem challenges us. Throughout our time of Lockdown, God has been with us; speaking to us, helping us and leading us on. Now we are being released.

The poem ended with these words, just right for us this morning.

‘What we know you’ve told us in the dark, we need to speak today,

What we know you gave us to invest it’s time to give away.’

The question for all of us is, are we ready?

A moment’s pause, as we consider our response.