

I wonder how many times you have attended a church service and wished that there were more people filling the pews. Have you ever bemoaned the fact that not many of the community come to our church services? It is so easy to do, and if we enjoy and value our faith through such worship it saddens us that others don't come and join us. Yet, our Gospel reading for this Sunday has a very good message to help us find an answer to the challenges we face of empty pews on a Sunday, and, let's be honest not very full coffers to help us keep our church buildings going.

The word that leapt out at me as I read through the passage was 'went'. 'Jesus went about all the cities and villages'. He didn't sit and wait for people to come to him, and he didn't try to share his message by taking them to the Synagogue. Jesus met the people in the every day normalities. He spoke to them using familiar illustrations from daily life. And, it wasn't just what he said that resonated, but who he was and how he was. In the light of his resurrection, we would say 'who he is and how he is!'

Many of us are put off by the idea of sharing our faith. We feel we don't have the words to say, the training or the teaching. We might not feel we have the theology, we are not particularly eloquent and we lack confidence. But Jesus never intended for us to do the sharing on our own. He never gave the disciples a prepared script and he doesn't do that for us today. What Jesus did give the disciples was an example, and a helper. He showed them how to love, and sent his Holy Spirit to enable them to share that love in every circumstance. We too have that example and that helper, and when they both come together within us then love comes out. Jesus gave wholly of himself to the people. He was, and is, wholly love and that is what we are asked to share with everyone we meet. Not just in our churches, but every moment of every day to every person we communicate with however that may be. Yes, we would love to see our churches full, but that isn't where lots of people are spiritually. But when we share God's love indiscriminately who knows if that won't be the place where they will come to at some point in their lives! However, that is not our concern, it is between them and God.

In these days where we have not been able to meet as family I hope that we have all learnt that 'being church' is not just about our regular gatherings, but it is about Christ within us and how we allow Christ to come out of us. We will all share his love in different ways, which is just as well! If we were all to love in the same way what would happen to those who struggle to connect with our way of sharing? God created us uniquely and wants us to love in that unique way. So, I encourage you every morning before you start the day to invite God to use you to share his love, through word and through action, to whomever he will bring in your way. We can all smile, show warmth and compassion, even pick a bunch of flowers from the garden for someone. All we need to do is follow the God prompts and leave the rest to him.

From 'The Blessing' Songwriters: Christopher Joel Brown / Cody Carnes / Kari Brooke Jobe / Steven Furtick

May His presence go before you
And behind you, and beside you
All around you, and within you
He is with you, He is with you

In tHe morning, in tHe evening
In your coming, and your going

In your weeping, and rejoicing
He is for you, He is for you