

Howrah Sandford Weekly Church Bulletin

19th July 2020

SUNDAY SERVICES at St Thomas's Howrah 8.30 and 10 am (both Holy Communion) and St Barnabas's South Arm 10 am (Holy Communion) followed by morning tea. We are regularly assessing how to improve the quality of worship, fellowship and hygiene.

There is also weekly online worship found on the home page of www.stthomashowrah.com

SENTENCE OF SCRIPTURE:

When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:36

BIBLE READINGS:

Colossians 4: 2-6

Psalms 96

Luke 15: 1-7

SERMON: Our mission, part 3:

Our parish mission is the three steps we need to take to fulfil our parish vision. They are:

1. Love God and his people....
2. Grow to be more like Jesus....
3. Share the message of Jesus's love

Today we're looking at step 3: "Share the message of Jesus's love". This means we have to deal with the dreaded "E" word! What do you feel when the word "evangelism" is mentioned? Comfortable or uncomfortable? You may be relieved with the thought that evangelism is something churches used to do, and have given up on. You may be thinking that sharing the Christian faith with others is difficult, impractical or even inadvisable for some of these reasons:

1. My faith is very personal and private
2. I think it's rude to discuss politics or religion
3. I don't know my faith well enough to be confident to share it
4. I am afraid of a negative reaction
5. I don't think that others would be interested in faith

But the fact remains that evangelism is something our church must do or we will die out. But far more important is that evangelism is in the heart of the God we worship. Look at Luke 15: 1-7, the parable of the lost sheep. Jesus' attitude to people who were lost from God was not to condemn them but to go out of his way to find them and bring them back to God. He considered it more important to look for the lost than to look after the found. It is his greatest joy.

We need to be clear what evangelism isn't. Evangelism is not a form of sales, marketing a package of Christian behaviours or opinions. Christianity is far more than an old-fashioned ideology and set of practices housed in a crumbling institution called the Church. Christianity is first and foremost about relationships, with God and with others.

Evangelism is introducing people to God, the God revealed in Jesus so they can have a life-transforming relationship with him. We humans hunger and thirst for this relationship with our Creator. The only truly satisfying answer to our aching emptiness or restlessness is for us to be united with God, he in us and we in him.

This relationship with the invisible, infinite God more often than not comes about by interacting with visible, finite human beings who love us, accept us and share with us in Christ's name. Often a sense of belonging to Jesus's people in a church or Christian group comes before knowing Jesus. That's why we need to be an outward-looking church with a welcoming, accepting attitude towards visitors and outsiders. This is vital if we are serious about evangelism.

So let's chill out about evangelism. Let's recognise that it is God's work which we have the privilege to join in. The Good Shepherd invites us to partner with him in seeking out the lost and bringing them into the safety of his fold.

Evangelism is joyful. It is about the joy of knowing and loving God and the joy of seeing others come to know and love God. So, the first step is to ask God to give us his heart for others. This prayer sums it up:

“Lord Jesus Christ, good shepherd of the sheep,
by whom the lost are sought and guided into the fold:
give us the faith to pray for those who do not know you,
the love to reach out to them
and the hope so we never give up.”

FOR YOUR PRAYERS:

For all the people who don't yet have a life-transforming relationship with God:

- Family members
- Neighbours
- Friends and colleagues
- Those who are interested
- Those who are apathetic
- Those who are hostile

Kate, our missionary in South Asia asks for prayer for all those devastated by the sudden death of the 14 year old son of her teammates Martin and Becky on Monday.

For steady progress in the process of appointing our new minister.

FROM THE MINISTER:

- For your diary: **Parish Annual Meeting** Sunday 23rd August at 11 am at St Thomas's preceded by one service only at 9.30 am and a cuppa. Easy lunch at 12, probably soup and sandwiches.
- Sign up over the next three weeks at church for the **parish electoral roll** and permission to have your contact details on **parish directory**. You can do it at church but I have attached a copy of the form for you to fill in and drop in the church letterbox or email to me.
- This brings up the **issue of privacy**. For perfectly good reasons some of you do not want your address, email or phone number made publicly known, so please take care not to pass on to non-parish people. Moreover there are government privacy of information laws that all organisations including churches need to abide by.
- I've drawn up **rosters** for St Thomas's for July and August and emailed them out. I find it a difficult task and apologise in advance if you have been left off or if you have been included but are unavailable.

With the love of Jesus
Andrew Lake
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