

**Collect, Readings and Sermon**  
**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2026**  
**The Second Sunday after Trinity**

**Collect**

Lord, you have taught us  
that all our doings without love are nothing worth:  
send your Holy Spirit  
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,  
the true bond of peace and of all virtues,  
without which whoever lives is counted dead before you.  
Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Exodus 19:2-8a**

The Israelites had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.' So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. The people all answered as one: 'Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do.'

**Psalm 100**

**The response to the Psalm is:**

We are God's people and the sheep of his pasture.

**Romans 5:1-8**

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

## **Matthew 9:35-10:8**

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.'

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near." Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

### **Post Communion**

Loving Father,  
we thank you for feeding us at the supper of your Son:  
sustain us with your Spirit,  
that we may serve you here on earth  
until our joy is complete in heaven,  
and we share in the eternal banquet  
with Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Sermon

I was curate in Weybridge, an affluent town in Surrey. We had a church school, and on Advent Sunday each year, we held a Christingle service. The children from the school were given the Children's society collection boxes early in November, and on Advent Sunday they brought them back to the church during the Christingle service. As you can imagine, it was a joyful, well-attended event.

When I started as Vicar of my next church, there was not a fixed pattern for the Christingle service. So I decided to hold one on Advent Sunday. I assumed that we would have lots of people coming – because that's what I experienced in Weybridge. A group of volunteers got together on the Saturday to make over a hundred Christingles, and we were all ready for the service.

You've been in churches long enough to know the next part. About twenty people came to the service. Fortunately one member of the congregation had cajoled her children to bring the grandchildren, so the church was not entirely empty, but it wasn't exactly what we had hoped for. Fortunately someone volunteered to take the remaining oranges to make marmalade, and we all licked our wounds.

How important it is to me to hear Jesus's words in this morning's gospel reading: "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few." I don't know about you, but that is often what I find myself feeling. I look at Whitchurch High Street [Station Road] on a sunny Saturday, buzzing with people of all ages; I see the children from Whitchurch High School [Glantaf] going to and from school; I see families playing rugby or visiting play parks. I know that this Ministry Area is highly populated with people of all ages. The harvest is indeed plentiful. And yet, here on a Sunday morning, it is also fair to say that it can feel as though the labourers are few. So the first thing I want to say this morning, and it is so important for us all to hear, is be encouraged. The situation that we face in our churches today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is not one that is new.

Of course I realise that there are nuances to that. People from each of the churches across the Ministry Area have described to me times when the churches were full. Compared with various times in the history of each church, these can feel like challenging years. But these are the times that we live in; these are the people that we live alongside. Perhaps the words of St. Paul help us the most in this regard.

I am always a little cautious with the way that Paul's words can sound as he says "we boast in our sufferings." I do not believe that God wishes for us to suffer; nor do I believe that all suffering needs to be accepted and endured without question. However, when we think about the challenges that we face as churches, perhaps it is worth reflecting on those words.

Paul suggests that: "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." I want to say that in the past weeks that I have been here in the Ministry Area, I have noticed some of the truth in what St. Paul is saying. I can see individuals and groups in each of the churches who feel the pain of smaller congregations, and the challenges of making our books balanced. And I also see people sticking with it; keeping on trying; continuing to seek positive ways forward. I see signs of that endurance, and the character that it brings. And perhaps we need to keep on looking for those signs of hope.

If the words of St. Paul offer reassurance, the gospel perhaps guides us towards the way forward. I want to focus on three things in particular. The first is prayer. At the beginning of the gospel reading, Jesus says: "ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest." I do not doubt that we have been praying for more labourers over the years. The thing is, though, we need to keep on praying. It really is only through prayer that we can develop that relationship with God that might help us to see things in new ways; that might offer us reassurance when things are tough; that might encourage us to try new things and see new paths. Everything that we do as churches needs to be grounded in prayer because that is the only way that we can really seek God's guidance and grow in our own lives of faith. In the end, a life of faith will only be attractive to others if they see lives being lived out faithfully.

The next thing that I think the gospel reading points towards is remembering that each one of us is called and commissioned. I just love the way that Matthew ensures that each one of the disciples is named in this reading. He didn't need to name the twelve, and yet he did so. It was – and is – in the nature of Jesus to call each one of us by name. Our individuality and uniqueness matters. More than that, it is cherished. However hard our discipleship can feel, it is so important to remember that we are called by God just as we are.

Again, the reading from St. Paul helps in this regard. That final sentence almost takes my breath away: "God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." I often think that God is much better at accepting – and forgiving – our sinfulness than we are. When Jesus called each of the disciples he did not wait until they knew what they were doing or the path that they were going to have to tread. We watch each of them making mistakes in various ways. And it's the same for us. Whether we want to acknowledge it or not, we are sinners. Or, to put it another way, we are human. And we are also called. Called to serve; called to love; called to pray; called to hope.

And then the final aspect of this gospel reading that I want to point out is that the disciples are sent. "... go, proclaim the good news." What is also interesting is the way that Jesus sends the disciples into particular communities. We know that later it will become clear that the gospel is for Jew and Gentile alike. Here, though, Jesus sends the disciples to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." I wonder whether that is a reminder to us, too, that we are called at different times in our lives to be among particular groups of people. There is little doubt that there is need everywhere. But right now, this is where we are, and these are the people we are among. And we are called, in whatever way we consider appropriate, to proclaim the good news. To show them what God's love looks like. To help them to see that God loves them too.

When we look at headlines about church decline it can be so easy to be despondent. But please, be encouraged. Each generation faces different challenges; ours is no different. And, as St. Paul reminds us: "character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to

us.” This is the truth that we proclaim. That God loves us, and that God’s love for us can give us hope, no matter what challenges we face. And so, as the gospel suggests, keep on praying; remember that you are called, by name, as you are; and go, proclaim the good news in whatever way you see fit.

But don’t stop there. Because it’s a cycle. So remember to return to God in prayer. To give thanks for the signs of hope; to seek guidance in the challenges; and to be reassured of God’s unending love.

Amen