

When the going gets tough 21/06/20

Call to worship Psalm 25 vs 4-6

Show me the right path, O LORD;
point out the road for me to follow.

⁵Lead me by your truth and teach me,
for you are the God who saves me.

All day long I put my hope in you.

⁶Remember, O LORD, your compassion and unfailing love,
which you have shown from long ages past.

Opening Prayer

Lord, help us to share the challenges of Discipleship, help us to support each other, unite us in your steadfast goodness. Strengthen and envision us to face the difficulties ahead, and may we faithfully play our part in your mission to this world. Amen

Hymn Praise my Soul the King of Heaven

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sx1eMwIDFb8>

Prayer of Confession

Let us pray, Merciful God, we confess that we find it difficult to live Christian lives. We are full of good intentions but are easily swayed from doing and saying what we know we should. We are distracted by busyness and self-interest, by lack of confidence and insensitivity to others. Help us turn our minds away from ourselves and our inadequacies and to focus on you and your forgiving and accepting love, for only you have the power to make us holy. And you Almighty God will do it

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Lord, you have called us to be your disciples.

Thank you for trusting us with this privilege.

Thank you for empowering us in the ways of service.

Thank you for giving us courage when we are fearful.

Thank you for your strength when we are vulnerable.

Thank you for knowing us, loving us, enhancing our lives.

Thank you, Lord.

Amen.

A short sketch for one actor based on Matthew 10.24-39

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kaylrLjPDY&list=PLuxEuCS161Y4ZM3ELsPIoG6EIwPVKkKiN&index=3&t=0s>

Yes, I'd like to make a complaint... about mis-selling...

No, not a pension, it's discipleship...

When? About a year or so ago, does that qualify?...

It depends? On what?...

Well, I was attracted by the huge benefits on offer. Let me just quote you a few examples from the brochure: straight paths, fishing trips, healing, wholeness, rewards, love and kindness, freedom from worry – hard to resist, I'm sure you'll agree...

What did I actually get? To be honest, I *have* seen some of those things, and that's been great, but...

What do you mean, 'So I got what I paid for'? I didn't *pay* anything...

So how was I mis-sold? Well, I gave up my job to follow this way of life. And yes, it has delivered some of the benefits promised – but now I find out there's a catch! Now I hear there'll be persecution, and accountability, and having to forgive others – more than once!

I have to give up possessions and may even have to leave my home and family. There's talk of lost sheep, wolves and serpents, arrest and flogging. Secrets will be shouted from the rooftops (no one wants that!), families may be split apart, and lives will be lost. You need to help me, what can I do?...

Did I read what?... The terms and conditions? No, I never bother with those, I just tick the box...

Hymn I have decided to follow Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OWWqS1jnOw>

Reading Matthew 10 vs 24-39

24."Students are not greater than their teacher,and slaves are not greater than their master.

Students are to be like their teacher;and slaves are to be like their master.

And since I,the master of the household have been called the prince of demons, the members of my household will be called by even worse names.

But don't be afraid of those who threaten you.
For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all.
What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes.
What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear.
Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body, they cannot touch your soul.
Fear only God who can destroy both soul and body in hell.
What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin?
But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it
And the very hairs on your head are all numbered.
So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.
Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.
But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.
Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth!
I came not to bring peace, but a sword.
I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.
Your enemies will be right in your own household!
If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy, of being mine;
or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine.
If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine.
If you cling to your life, you will lose it, but if you give up your life for me, you will find it"

Sermon

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRZDUUXB4dU>

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going".

This is a modern saying, suggesting that challenging situations can inspire us to respond with strength and new resolve.

I guess we have all been challenged in some way in our lives, that we can recall.
And these challenges can be costly can't they?

"Keep on going".

"Hang in there">

Practice makes perfect".

You can do it".

I have certainly had all of these words said to me on many many occasions!
Some things I mastered, some I didn't.

We are considering today, the challenging realities of being a disciple of Jesus.
What it costs to be a disciple.

The reading from Matthew's gospel is one appointed from today's lectionary.

We join it mid way through chapter 10.

Jesus continues to instruct his twelve disciples as he sends them out, to embark on their mission to the towns around the region..

It's good to remember that as modern day disciples in 2020, these instructions are for us as well.

This collection of sayings of Jesus included by Matthew contain some difficult words. The first section reminds the disciples that their task is to be like their teacher and master, Jesus.himself.

Their mission is his mission, and their lives are to assume the character of Jesus' own life,

Speaking to others what they have heard from Jesus.

The second section tells them not to be afraid.

Yes, they will face hostility and even violent opposition.

Jesus offers the reassurance that comes from knowing that the God who cares even for the sparrow,

the smallest and most insignificant bird, cares for them.

In the final section the true cost of discipleship is spelt out.

Even those closest to us will not necessarily go along with us.

I wonder if some of the disciples at this stage, hearing Jesus describing the disturbing things that could happen to them, were thinking that they would very much like to change their minds , and wondering how soon it would be appropriate to make their resignation speech!!

Yes, choosing to serve Jesus and do the work of his kingdom changes us.

The complete break with previous held commitments and priorities ,that is required by Jesus; is summed

up in the image of carrying your own cross.v 38.

It is fitting that as Jesus sends out his disciples, his last instructions contain a challenge about the reality of following Him.

The picture of a man on his way to his crucifixion would have been a vivid image in the first century.

This is the first time in this Gospel that Jesus hints at the manner of his death, and it is just as real a challenge to us today, as it was then.

Most of us will not be put in a position of having to choose whether we are willing to die for Christ.

But, if we are to take Jesus seriously, our own life's safety and comforts must take second place.

So, yes , there are challenging realities, which as disciples of Jesus we will face. Once we get involved with Jesus, life is never the same again.

I'm sure you will agree with me, when I say that "The going has been tough over these last 3 months or so.

And I guess will continue to be tough in many different ways as we continue to come through the Covid 19 crisis.

The phone conversation which we heard Caroline making earlier was a response to Jesus' "advert" for new disciples.

This advert is realistic in that Jesus doesn't offer life without problems.

Rather, he promises to help us through the difficulties we will meet.

He will walk alongside us.

We are not immune to trouble and difficulties even at such times as we are in now.

Unprecedented times. We have heard those words so many times haven't we ?

Being obedient to God is never the easy option.

There is always a cost.

Therefore it is the grace of God which enables us to live faithful lives, to speak God's word and to endure hostility that may come our way.

Jesus has been there before us and His life and death create a pattern for believers, so his Resurrection offers us hope of transformation.

Alleluia,

God always has us in his care and keeps us close to Him..

May we all find new strength and new resolve as we serve Him in our world today

Amen

Hymn Will you come and follow me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o469PRLdbHU>

Prayers for others

God eternal, all knowing, and total love, you see the whole of human life. You feel its pain and joy. There is nothing we can tell you about facts or feelings.

We don't like what is happening in our own society, we see, anger, violence and fear. We feel helpless before such sadness and pain. Help us to see how our concern can be channelled into positive action and change.

You have loved us; help us to love others. You have healed us, made us whole, holy; help us to heal others by helping them to be whole. You have strengthened us, so may we strengthen others. You have shown us compassion, may we become more compassionate. You carry us through the worst moments, may we be enabled to carry all who are weak.

Lord we are your disciples, make us one with you.

We pray for those whom you have called to service and are currently working hard to help and protect us, doctors, nurses, carers, Paramedics, Police, Fire Brigade, shop workers, engineers, and many more key workers.

We are your disciples, make us one with you.

We pray for those who serve you by telling your story, those who teach, share, listen and reach out to those in need.

We are your disciples, make us one with you.

We pray for those who engage in a ministry of Prayer, Ministers, lay workers, chaplains, stewards, and pastoral visitors.

We are your disciples, make us one with you.

We pray for our own discipleship, that we face our challenges with courage.

We are your disciples, make us one.

May our united discipleship further your work and help to establish your promised kingdom. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name

Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn Lord of the years.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkTrFQLy6js>

Blessing

Lord God, assure us today that you know about the difficulties and challenges ahead, and that you will enable us to meet them, that we may grow in patience and increase in spiritual strength.

May we see your glory as we have seen it before, may we be built up in faith encouraged in love and equipped to live, through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen.