Sunday 6th July 2025

From Lk 10 1-11, 16-20 and Galatians 6:(1-6), 7-16

When we lived on a large farm near Griffith a locust plague came in from the desert. 24 hour combine harvesting to save the vestige of the crop. “At least it might sell for stock food.”

no chatting with friends along the road, when the harvest is ready, you get it in quickly. Miss your chance and the crop can be ruined. Jesus is saying, “This is urgent, you’ve got a task to do, no messing around, no time for trying to sort out your baggage limits, no time for shopping, no time for social chats along the road. Go to it. The Kingdom of God is near now, so now is the time to respond.”

A bit of background. I watched a documentary on China’s one child policy. I don’t remember anything about the show set in -20 degrees in N. China except that the doors of all the houses were open and neighbours could wander in freely. This meant that the Michelin Man clothing was essential, right down to toddlers.

A trip I did with our daughter Rebecca to Korea, in the rural areas, the traditional houses had a public courtyard space and then a private family space.

Imagine the Samaritan home as somewhat the same as Korea or N China, the evidence is that of this public/private mix in houses. How strange, for us! But it changes how we see the passage. The disciples would enter the public part of the home and ask to be accepted and invited in or were feared and rejected.

It is the same message for those who respond and for those who don’t. To those who welcome you, say “The kingdom of God has come near to you.”
To those who refuse to welcome you, say “Yet know this, the kingdom of God has come near.” Why? Because if the kingdom of God has come near, then you stand judged by your own response.

The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.

Now I want to have a go at kicking down a common misconception. You see the usual response to this passage in churches to a statement like that from Jesus is to say we need more ordained clergy. We need to attract and train more people for the pastoral ministry. But I want to argue that that is wrong. Also not going to happen, enough.
Pastors are not supposed to be the only or even the best messengers of the gospel to the world.

You are the people that Christ is sending out, like lambs among wolves to share the peace of Christ, to eat and drink with people, to respond in mercy to sickness and brokenness, and to talk about the nearness of God and of God’s reign in the world. That is Christ’s commission to the whole church. You are all ministers and priests. One verse from

**The summons- John Bell**

**Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?**

Listen to this – just as Jesus did in sending out the disciples. He did not go, support during at all- but equipped before and responded after.

The role of the church service is not to be the place of evangelising. It equips and sends out. You hear it at the end of every service. – We have a benediction and sending out.

Let’s make a poster, website or pinboard. “The ministers of this church,” and put everybody’s photo on it with a brief caption identifying their ministries. Pam will explore this thought more
Person 1 – keeps in contact with young people, another ministers among frail elderly people helping with household chores. Person 3 – helps run rehabilitation group for people with head injuries, raises two children, works with Amnesty International. Person 4 – leads worship services, works for justice with connections to the indigenous community, coaches junior basketball team.

What, all we did was have a games night. “I was watching Satan falling from heaven like a flash of lightening.”
What, all we did was offer a holiday to a struggling family. “I was watching Satan falling from heaven like a flash of lightening.”

Your little drop in the ocean might not seem like much, but when the tide turns every drop is in it together and nothing can stand in your way.

no chatting with friends along the road, does this mean don’t just seek out those who are your friends in your Christian journey. When the harvest is ready, you get it in quickly. Miss your chance and the crop can be ruined.

In his own hand and in big bold letters, Paul writes to make a point more forcefully.

It would appear that the social scenario behind Paul’s argument was something like this. We are still in the first generation of Christians, and while Paul is spreading the faith in non-Jewish cities (in this case in Galicia about 1,000km walk away) back in Jerusalem, Christianity is still regarded as a variant form of Judaism. Relations between the Jews and the Romans are becoming more and more strained, and as a result Jewish nationalist sentiment is being stirred up, especially by the group known as the zealots.
Their nationalist agenda later prompted a revolution which resulted in massive reprisals from the Romans, including the destruction of the Temple. As is always the case when nationalist fervour is being whipped up, whether in response to foreign occupation forces on one side or the fear of terrorism on the other, society becomes increasingly intolerant of any divergence from the values, norms and lifestyles that are seen as expressing our national identity. Circumcision comes to the fore as an issue here.
The zealots would have been sending out the fridge magnets with a number to call if you see any suspicious behaviour. It’s worth a quick post on Snapchat to let others know how your rights might be compromised.

We need to recognise that had Paul been looking at the world we live in, he may well have directed his assault at sincere and well-meaning people like us. He may well have seen us as the ones who were trying to domesticate the gospel and make it look like it was the new ally of traditional middle class western family values and aspirations. And the uncomfortable truth is that we are horribly, horribly susceptible to exactly this. A challenge is to swim against the tide

Paul’s idea of boasting in the cross is deliberately bizarre, although it is hard for us to hear that now, because we are so used to the cross as a tame enough symbol to turn into a necklace or an installation on the top of buildings. Boasting in the cross of Christ is like suggesting that you would boast that your leader was put through a meat mincer in the public square.

Think of the 70 (or 72 disciples in some versions) as campaign volunteers out door knocking. The message he asked them to proclaim, funnily enough, had nothing to do with tightening border protection, keeping the muslims at bay, or opposing same-sex marriage, despite what you might have thought from some of the outspoken, so-called Christian parties. The message Jesus asked them to proclaim was firstly a message of peace, and secondly, wherever the word of peace was welcomed, an assurance that the kingdom of God had drawn near. In other words, as you welcome peace, the culture of God can be seen to be emerging in your midst.

Jesus does not even suggest that the seventy be careful about the moral or religious credentials of those from whom they accept hospitality. To anyone who welcomes the word of peace and offers welcome and hospitality, the promise is given that the culture of God is emerging among them. And when the culture of God begins emerging, begins taking hold among people of peace and hospitality, the satan can be seen crashing down in a screaming heap.

When I say that the satan (small ‘s’) is not a name, but a job description, what sort of job is it?
The word has its origins in the law courts. In a criminal trial in the ancient world, the satan is the prosecutor or the accuser; the one who brings the charges against you. But as we see in that heavenly law-court scene at the start of the book of Job, the satan will also bring accusations against the innocent, and act maliciously to try to trick or force innocent people into either sinning or at least believing in their own guilt. The satan is like the corrupt interrogator who will use physical torture and psychological abuse to break down people until they will confess to anything.

This is the absolute classic satanic strategy; to fan the fires of suspicion, hatred and fear. You can see how it is a direct assault on Jesus’s strategy of building a culture of loving neighbours and enemies alike, and taking special care of the least of these, the poor, the orphans, the refugees, and the detainees. A divided society at war with itself, where love of others becomes more and more difficult is what results from us catching the satanic contagion of finger-pointing and accusation.

In a world where the satan is inciting everyone to behave with the defensive aggression of cornered wolves, when we welcome in the vulnerable refugees who come seeking asylum, the satan can be seen crashing down to earth.

In a world where the satan is inciting everyone to strengthen their borders and go to war with every perceived threat, when we receive our enemies with genuine gestures of grace and we speak peace to potential hostility, the satan can be seen crashing down to earth.

In a world where the satan is inciting everyone to cling fearfully to their own national or individual resources, when we share what we have generously with those who come as signs of peace and hope, for the labourer deserves to be paid, the satan can be seen crashing down to earth.

In a world where the satan is inciting everyone to point their fingers at others but turn their faces away, when we look into the eyes of the victims and recognise and honour the Christ in them, the satan can be seen crashing down to earth.

When we welcome the seeds sown among us and the culture of God takes root and begins to emerge and flourish, full of grace and peace and welcome and love for all, the satan can be seen crashing down to earth.