

This short act of worship has been produced for you.  
If you are well enough and able,  
why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time  
when you would normally be sharing with others in church and  
pray for them as they pray for you.

**Welcome & Invocation:** Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: this is a new day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it! Wherever you are - in the comfort of your homes, in a Nursing home or in a hospital, I welcome you in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Amen!

**Opening prayers:**

Almighty God, we thank you for the precious gift of a new day and of a new opportunity to start afresh with you. We are grateful that, of your own free goodness and mercy you have created us, and through the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon us, you have reawakened in us your Spirit of reconciliation, peace and hope of a new life. Guard us by your love and, in your wisdom, keep us in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen!**

**Confession of Sins:**

Lord Jesus Christ: We confess that in an age of twisted values, we have lost the truth we need. In sophisticated language, we

have justified our greed. By our struggle for possessions we have robbed the poor and the weak – Hear our cry Lord and heal our nations:

For communities divided by the walls of class and race, hear our cry and heal our nations. Above all, Lord Jesus Christ, may the Power of your love and your forgiveness bring us back to you as your friends and partners in your Mission wherever you have placed us. Thank you for your amazing Grace. Alleluiah. Amen!

**Bible Reading: 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.

### **Reflection - God’s Mission for Today**

After reading the Gospel passage from Matthew 9: 35 to 10:8 that we have just listened to, I realise once more how practical, how relevant and how down to earth Jesus’ teachings are. As a matter of fact, one cannot read such a passage and fail to realise how much the human condition is at the heart of what Jesus called ‘Proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom’. So, in my reflection, I would like to share briefly with you 3 key points that stand out from this passage.

#### **1) God’s Mission as Healing and Liberation**

The first thing that caught my attention in this passage is the decentralised and approachable style of Jesus’ ministry. The

Holistic approach of His leadership style made him to give priority, not only to the physical wellbeing of his followers, but also, he focussed His attention to their spiritual growth as well as to their mental wellbeing. In fact, Jesus was always on the move, connecting to his followers, as Matthew put it so well in the passage *‘about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom.’* (V.35).

By doing so, Jesus put healing and liberation at the heart of God’s Mission for which He was sent and for which He in turn was sending his disciples. In fact, in Jesus’ perspective, healing and liberation certify the presence of the realm of heaven. Both Jesus’ own mission and that of the Twelve bring not only proclamation but also healing. Jesus sent forth the Twelve to perform his own works, the very works that have defined his ministry from the beginning (4:23-25). But also, He urged them to advance beyond their comfort zones, into new and emergent contexts. If we apply this to our context today, I think that Jesus would want us to be more dynamic, more proactive, and more inquisitive in our approach to God’s mission wherever we are called to. For example, the personal challenge that I have set to myself is how I can attend more efficiently to the pastoral needs of those in my local community who are suffering from ‘alienating diseases’ such as dementia, Alzheimer’s disease which I did not know anything about ten, fifteen years ago! This is crucial. For Jesus would want those people to be liberated and be cured because they

too, are God's precious children. That's why we should not take lightly our prayers for bio-medical scientists, medical doctors, consultants and nurses. For, knowingly or unknowingly, they can play a major role in God's Mission for humankind. Whether with Jesus or commissioned by Jesus, the authentic proclamation of God's realm is marked by healing and liberation.

This is precisely Jesus' reply when John the Baptist inquires, "Are you the one who is coming, or should we wait for another?" To this Jesus replied: ***'The blind are seeing, the lame are walking, the lepers are being cleansed, the deaf are hearing, the dead are living--all these signs accompany the proclamation of the good news'*** (Matthew 11:5).

## 2) God's Mission as Compassion

In verse 36 we read that ***'When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without shepherd.'***

Jesus' compassion is in response to not just illness or the lack of food, but the situation of vulnerability. He is moved by those who apparently live on the edges of society because of illness, disability, ostracism, and social convention that renders some people "harassed and helpless" (9:36). This is very well in tune with his Mission Statement as he declared it publicly in

Luke 4: 18:

***'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free...'***

The key lesson here from Jesus is that, the essentials of life are not just healing the ailment but also letting those who are weary and in pain know that they are seen. Moving compassion is about the action of seeing those who are not often seen.

Compassion in the Gospel of Matthew is not simply feeling sympathy and empathy, but it is acting concretely on behalf of the afflicted. Perhaps, because Jesus is the only person explicitly named as showing compassion in this Gospel of Matthew, it has messianic significance. Yet, Jesus' messianic compassion extends beyond him to the work of those who follow him and into the life of the communities they enter.

But, more crucially, this passage is a true witness to what the Pentecost season should be about. Pentecost is not simply about Christians recognizing how God has empowered us through the Holy Spirit to be bold and courageous for the sake of the Gospel message. This is not a season of empowered and inspired individualism. This is a season of recognizing we have been empowered to see the world around us, particularly the people in the world who are often overlooked and ignored,

and to act on their behalf in ways that address the circumstances that endanger their lives and communities. After all, Jesus' compassion for others is always sparked by a single observation, which is that "others" are "harassed and helpless" and we must do something to address it. What authenticates Christian compassion is the action that accompanies the one feeling it, not the emotion alone. It is truly appalling to hear about the abuse and all sorts of manipulation that many vulnerable people, especially children and women go through in our local communities. If you are one of them, please be reassured that Jesus loves you and is passionately compassionate for you, and would do anything to heal you and liberate you. Likewise, I also do strongly believe that Jesus' compassion for all those who are oppressed, marginalised, overlooked and ignored, would have moved him to intervene in the current burning issue regarding the institutional racism and the disgusting brutality that millions of Black people across the world have been going through from generation to generation. I do believe that Jesus would have said something like this: ***'If you pretend to love God, but continue to keep your status quo of institutional racism toward your Black brothers and sisters, you offend God who created them; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen!'*** (1John 4:20, paraphrase mine).

### 3) God's Mission as Transforming Sinners into Saints

In this passage, we see a brief catalogue of the disciples. Look at their names. Notice Judas' presence and consider the disciples' combined qualifications or lack thereof. This was no all-star group. This motley group of misfits was not selected for their credentials: they were selected for what the Spirit of God would achieve through them. Despite their shortcomings, God used them to change the world. This reinforces my strong belief that 'God does not call the qualified. He qualifies those He calls.' Likewise, let us not limit our perceptions of what God may do through us by thinking through the scope of our own powers of persuasion, intellects, and resources. Rather, let us invite God to do something in proportion to the Spirit's capacity to work through us.

My prayer is that, whoever you are, whatever your present circumstances are, whatever your social background may be, may Jesus, in his divine compassion touch you. May Jesus find a unique way to use you for the sake of His Kingdom on earth. May Jesus justify you in His own way. Above all, may Jesus' redeeming Love and Grace enfold you and heal you. Amen!

#### Prayers of intercession:

God of peace, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of all: We pray particularly so that through your grace and mercy, you may intervene in the major health and

economic turmoil the whole world is going through now, due to the Coronavirus.

We pray for all the key workers and the amazing NHS staff members who are constantly putting their lives at risk by caring daily for thousands of patients across the UK. We pray specifically for Nurses, Medical Doctors, Consultants, Paramedics, Care Assistants, Social Service Officers, so that, in their tiredness and personal anxiety, they may hear your voice saying to them: Do not be afraid: I am with you!

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**

We pray Lord, for all who strive for justice and for our welfare: Teachers, Fire Brigade Officers, Children and Youth Workers, Civil Servants, Street Pastors, cleaners and rubbish collectors... May you, Lord, grant them your divine strength to carry out their duties with integrity and wisdom.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**

Lord, Jesus Christ, we pray that you may govern the hearts and minds of those in authority at the levels of Central and Local governments: We also pray for MPs and their special advisers. May you grant them your divine wisdom in these times where, even the best experts are themselves confused.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**

Lord Jesus, we pray for all vulnerable women, young girls, men, children who are in abusive relationship. May you Lord

intervene in order to bring release to those victims of human exploitation. We pray for the families in many nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of human cruelty and needless wars. May they also taste at last your peace. For you have come to bring Good news to the poor and release to the captives...

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**

We pray for Church members, for our friends, family members or colleagues who are struggling to cope with the current lockdown situation. We pray for thousands of families who have been bereaved or unwell due to the Coronavirus or other diseases.... May you Lord comfort them and heal their inner wounds. Through Jesus Christ's name we pray. **Amen!**

Finally, we pray for all those who are reliving some past painful experiences of racism and discrimination in any form. We pray that through the power of your love, you may heal their inner wounds. Above all, we pray that through the insights of the Holy Spirit, you may open the minds of us all, that we may understand that you have created all your people in your image and that, in your Kingdom there is place for only one race: the human race!

**The Lord's Prayer:**

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

Before we receive the blessing, I would like to leave you with some extracts from hymn **StF 611**: *'Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you; pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too. We are pilgrims on a journey, and companions on the road; we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load. I will hold the Christ-light for you in the night-time of your fear; I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear...'*

**Blessing:**

May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; may the Lord

lift his countenance upon you, and give you peace. And may the power and blessing of the Risen Christ dwell on us and our families now and forever!

**ALLELUIAH! THANKS BE TO GOD!**