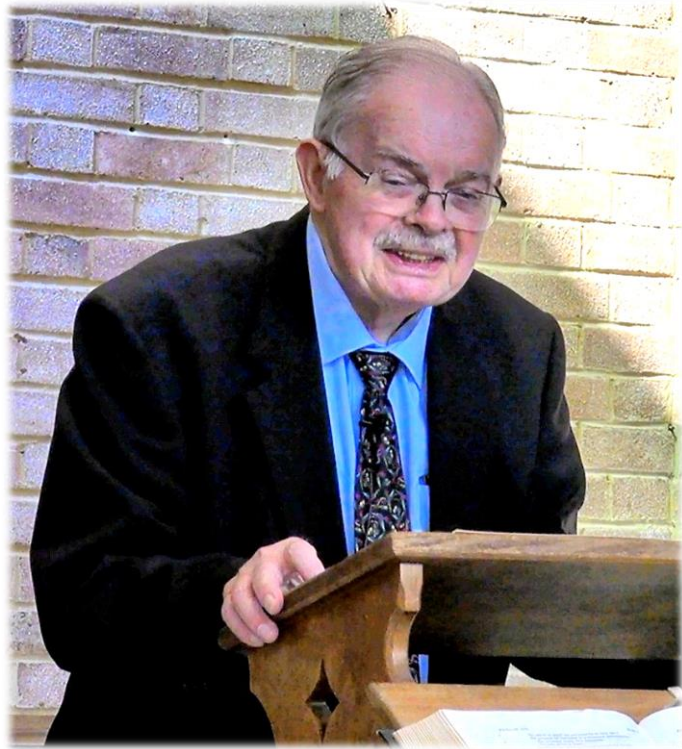


Morning Service Sunday 14th June – led by Mike Findley



I don't think it's the first time that Mike has told us about what it was like in his house when he was growing up. His mother had worked part-time, and Saturday morning was cleaning morning. She would say, "I cannot do this all on my own; you children will have to help." He felt it could be a useful picture for the day's reading. Jesus had been travelling from town to town and synagogue to synagogue. He'd seen how much needed to be done, and he could not do it all on his own. So he'd called his disciples and sent them out to share in the work. That was the message for us too. We were called to be Christ's hands, eyes, ears, and voice in the world today.

The reading from Matthew 9 & 10 told us that Jesus had had compassion. At its heart, compassion meant "to suffer with." Jesus had seen people suffering, and he'd suffered with them. He'd seen people who were harassed, helpless, and without hope — like sheep without a shepherd. When we looked around today, it was not so very different. Many people felt lost, directionless, and forgotten.

In Jesus' day, the authorities had often seemed more interested in power, order, and their own advantage than in the plight of ordinary people. The people had had little guidance, little protection, and little sense that anyone truly cared for them. Jesus had seen a great harvest of souls waiting to be gathered and told his disciples that they must help. "Go out and do the things I have been doing."

At first, the disciples had been sent only to the people of Israel. But as the biblical story unfolded, it had become clear that God's message was not for one people alone. The mission had begun in one place but did not stay there. It opened outward to the whole world.

There was also very practical advice in this reading: "You received without payment; give without payment." The disciples were told not to make personal gain their aim. Their work was not to be driven by ambition, reward, or status, but by the kingdom of God. This remained true for us. We were not to force people, pressure them, or manipulate them. We were to love people into God's realm. The message was to be shown in what we did: in compassion, kindness, generosity, and presence.

What we offered could not be bought: hope, peace, joy, and a sense of being valued and loved. These were gifts of grace. They were not things anyone could earn or purchase. We could not make God love us more by our efforts. God knew us as we were, and God accepted us as we were. A place in heaven was not something you earned. It was gift, pure gift. And because we ourselves were accepted, we were called to help other people know that they too were wanted, valued, and loved.

So many people today felt lonely, overlooked, and unimportant. Part of our calling was to show them otherwise — to help them know that they mattered, that they were respected, and that they were not forgotten. The message of the Bible had not been written in easy times. It was written in times of war, oppression, adversity, and unjust rule. That mattered. The call to love, to show kindness, and to bring peace had never been meant only for comfortable times. It was given precisely for difficult times. So when we wondered whether life was too hard today for such a calling, we should remember that the Christian message was born in hardship.

There were small but beautiful details in the reading. When you entered a house, offer peace. And if that peace was not received, not to condemn — simply take the peace back. Jesus also said that when we faced difficulty, not to be anxious about what to say. The words would be given to us. That did not mean speaking would always feel easy. It took courage to go out and speak to others. But courage grew with practice, and confidence came with experience.

When he'd first begun preaching, Mike had been told by an older church secretary to speak from the heart and from experience; to speak about what he knew, what he had lived, and what God had done in him. That was how

we were to speak to others about faith: not in a forced or artificial way, but honestly. We were to tell people what being a Christian meant to us, how faith gave us peace, inner strength, calm, and purpose.

In many religions, the focus seemed to be, “How do I get where I want to go? How do I improve myself?” But the Christian calling was not only about our own spiritual destination. It was also about helping others find hope, peace, purpose, and the love of God. That was why the disciples’ work would have stood out so clearly in their own time. In a society where many people were neglected and unsupported, their compassion and service would have looked strikingly different. And the same was true now: when we acted with love, mercy, and kindness, the message would shine out. We never knew how our words might reach another person. What meant little to one might mean a great deal to another. So our calling was simply to be faithful: to speak when needed, to act with compassion, and to trust that God would use what we offered.

The message was clear. We were sent out, just as the disciples were sent out, to show compassion, to bring peace, to offer hope, to help people know they were valued, and to let God’s love be seen in our actions. We were not to be afraid. The words we needed would be given to us, and the work we were called to do was still the same: to help bring others into the joy, hope, and peace of God’s kingdom.