

Sermon for 21st June 2020 – Trinity 2 – Year A – Matthew 10:24 – 39

May I speak in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I'm sure you agree with me that this internet worship has been an interesting experience. It certainly has been so to me. I have learnt skills, I never thought I would. For example, how to livestream on YouTube, what sort of software works for YouTube... well actually I'm still learning about that. The light. Where the light comes so that I'm visible to you. Then of course the livestreaming has been interrupted by Easter Candle collapsing behind me on Easter morning. And the biggest hiccup is always, the sudden loss of internet connection, leaving you hanging...

In YouTube, there's this wonderful thing called stats, that tells how many people are tuning in at livestreams and how many people watch later. It's been fascinating to see who joins at the same time as we go live, mainly because it makes us instantly connected, despite of not able to see each other. I, of course, wonder how it is for those who are watching the service later, on their own.

Today we have some really tough readings from the Bible. And what Jesus says is hard to hear isn't it? *“Do not think I came to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”*

This is not something we want to hear as we come to worship our Saviour Jesus Christ and our loving God. We come because we want to hear the Good News of Prince of Peace and God's unconditional love. We come because we want to hear how our wrongdoings are once again forgiven. We come

because we want to breathe more freely, and feel less fearful and anxious. We come because we know the power is in the community. But the past three months as been something we never would have imagined we would experience, and gathering together even via internet worship has been a life line to each one of us. We have felt connected despite of our physical distance. We have come to hear the Good News of Prince of Peace and God's unconditional love for us.

Yet, today we hear something uncomfortable.

Jesus tells his disciples that to follow him. Truly and fully to follow him means that they will experience disturbance they never could imagine. Their lives would be shattered and their proclamation of Jesus' message to others would shatter their lives too.

As we have engaged in worship via internet from the comforts of our own homes these past three months. We have become customized of no rushing out, trying to make our children to get their acts together in order to get to church on time. No need to even get out of the bed if we so wish. No need to put on makeup, do our hair. We just show up if we wish and feel like it. Yes, the stats tell how many have tuned in live, but it doesn't tell if you have been in or not.

But I wonder if there is some dangers too. Have we been pushed into a false reality of *'Oh, I just watch a bit'*, or *'Oh, I just watch it later, if I have time'*, or *'Oh, I watch it and then I'm done with faith stuff.'*

I wonder if we have become more Sunday Christians than never before. Christians who only engage with their faith on Sundays and rest of the week goes by without a thought...

If that's true then we aren't taking our faith seriously. We haven't quite realised that the service ends with these words, "Our worship has ended, **our service begins.**" Or "Go in peace, **to love and serve the Lord.**"

Here's the thing, our faith requires of us to be more than Sunday Christians. Our faith is supposed to challenge, surprise or disturb others, even ourselves. We know that we are called to take a step into the world that is thirsting for God's justice and love, just like those fearful disciples in our Gospel reading.

Our world that is in turmoil in so many ways, needs to know that despite of the cost of lived out faith, we are willing to stand up for injustices such as racism and societal inequality. That we are willing to stand up for these issues within ourselves, within our families and communities we are part of.

And yes, to do just that comes with the personal cost. On the day I was ordained as a distinctive deacon, Christian Social worker, in the Finnish Lutheran church, my only aunt asked me if I truly believed and let me quote, "All that nonsense?" I knew that it would change our relationship, when I said, "yes." And indeed it changed so much that I don't have any relationship with her any more. But that is the cost one has to be prepared to take on.

So, although we are still forced to worship from the comforts of our homes, we are also to remember that we shouldn't live as Sunday Christians, because that is a life half-lived. A life of blandness and niceness, a life of disengaged devotion and life of piety without service.

As we bit by bit come out of Lockdown, we are faced with many challenges. Not just how we do 'new worship' in the church building. But we will be challenged about the changes we may

want to make in our lives. Some of those challenges are already on us because we've been made redundant, we are still furloughed, our financial situation has changed dramatically. But also, we might rethink how we live lives engaged with the God, how do we become Every Day Christians, telling the truth of Jesus in the light, and proclaiming from the housetops.

***"Fear not,"** says Jesus. We could also hear him say this, "Don't be afraid of changes that lead to justice and real peace. Don't be afraid of a conversion of heart. I am with you. To be honest, what is being demanded, is what I have commanded you to do from the very beginning: Love one another."*

So if we can hear Jesus' words of love to us "in the darkness," let us speak it "in the light," and let us proclaim it "from the housetops!"

Sisters and brothers in Christ, may God's love in us shine a light in the darkness!

Amen.