

Third Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, 3rd July 2022



Dear Friends in Christ,

‘The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”’ (Luke 10: 17))

July 3rd marks the feast day of St Thomas the Apostle in the Christian calendar. Thomas is particularly known for his incredulity that the Son of God could possibly be standing before him in a locked upper room following Jesus’ very public crucifixion, death and burial. Even though the other disciples had accepted Jesus’ resurrection, Thomas refused to believe until he was able to touch Jesus’ wounds for himself. Thomas’ thirst for the truth and Jesus’ tender response, recorded in Chapter 20 of John’s Gospel, has proven to be a powerful source of support to the many millions who have come to faith without having the luxury of meeting Christ and talking with Him face to face. John 20: 25 records the moment of Thomas’ epiphany:

Thomas cried, ‘My Lord and my God!’ and Jesus replied, ‘Because you have seen me, Thomas, you believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believe.’

The rest of Thomas’ apostolic life is less well understood, though the fact that he was stabbed with a spear in India near Madras in 72AD, helps us to understand Thomas’ faith-filled commitment to spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ across the globe.



‘Thomas the Apostle’ by Rubens

This week's set bible text comes from the Synoptic Gospel of Luke in Chapter 10 and speaks into the discipleship of other extraordinary characters who had encountered the Christ. Luke bears witness to the transformational impact Jesus' presence had on their previously ordinary lives. We read accounts of the parable of the Good Samaritan, teaching us all how we should respond to the suffering of others, and the story of Mary and Martha's dilemma as to whether they work for Jesus or sit and listen to Him with rapt attention. Preceding these two iconic readings, however, we also hear a story of 72 followers of Jesus whom He sends out in pairs to prepare the villages and towns for Jesus' upcoming arrival there.



'The Sending of the 12' by Duccio di Buoninsegna

There is an urgency about these disciples' missional work in Jesus' name. So much so, we are not even given their names. They are not prominent, like John, Peter, Andrew or Thomas. They are simply ordinary people going about their ordinary lives. But it is the relative anonymity of these seventy-two people which is the important factor here – because these 72 unremarkable individuals represent us all. I wonder how they must have felt being sent out to unfamiliar places, walking, uninvited, into the homes of complete strangers with a bold message to proclaim. I imagine they would have felt no different to us under similar circumstances. Just try and think for a moment what it feels like when we take the risk to open up about our faith to another in all those delicate situations where Jesus asks us to bring the good news of His life-giving Spirit to the doubtful and confused.

Just like those 72 disciples, we too are sent out, and we return again. We do this every week. On Sunday we gather to be sent out once again. This text is particularly prophetic at Pentecost, when ordinands who have been training to become deacons and priests in the Church of England are ordained. Please pray for this year's cohort who will be deaconed and priested in Winchester Cathedral this coming weekend.



'Patrobulus, Hermas, Linus, Caius, Philologus' Source: Anon

The message we are to live out through our individual characters and our actions may take us to unfamiliar places where we too enter uninvited. This is why it is so important for us to hear the joy with which the 72 return to Jesus from their missional work, proclaiming, *'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.'*

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus often consoles the disciples, encouraging them not to be afraid when they are beset by demons, but to have absolute faith in Him as they spread the Gospel truth. The first fear we might feel when we risk sharing our faith with others, oddly enough, is the fear of people themselves. This text teaches us that we are to heal the sick and bless all we meet. Some people will like what we do and support us, others will not. But Jesus tells us we are not to be afraid when we recognize another soul's deep brokenness, which only Jesus' love can heal.

The second worry we might face when we try to do Jesus' work is the fear of failure. But Jesus recognises we might not always be able to achieve the things we want to in His name. In this reading, Jesus says that when people in a town welcome us, we are to stay and work among them, but when they reject us, we are to cut our losses and go elsewhere. Our concern, therefore, is not how successful we might be, but our faithfulness.

The third 'demon' we have is the fear of material possessions. Jesus tells the 72 not to take much with them – even things they think they will need. The problem does not lie with the items in and of themselves. The problem lies with our attitude towards material possessions. Certain things might seem overly important to us and so Jesus teaches us the way to the kingdom is by letting go of the material world, and holding fast to Him and His Godly values. What is important is not what we own, or even what we don't possess, but whether we recognise our faith in Jesus as being the only really important possession.

The last of the fears we are being taught to lay down is the fear of 'needs.' Not once, but twice Jesus tells the 72 that in their travels they must eat what they are given. We all have the same needs - among them food and shelter, affection and support, and a feeling of achievement. It is part of what it means to be human to admit our needs. It is also part of what it means to follow Jesus, who was not afraid to seek hospitality and support or to be dependent on others. Jesus is teaching us not to continually 'rescue' others by caring for them, but to be realistic about our own limits and allow others to share their love and concern for us too. If we constantly take on the role of the care-giver, Jesus says, we will become exhausted, and we will also run the risk of rejecting the equally valid gifts and skills which others wish to share.



'The 72 with Jesus' illustration from 'Communicating Christ,' Colombia

Jesus taught Thomas, whose courageous desire to know the truth about Jesus for himself went on to support and encourage generations of people to trust in the reality of God-with-us. In the same way, Jesus wants to free us from every form of fear and doubt so that we too can root our faith in the firm foundation of His love.

Just like Thomas, we will be freed from the fears and doubts which bind us, so that we will be able to go out with enthusiasm and joy to bless others with an understanding of God's love for them. During our daily lives therefore, let us strive to be like all those disciples before us, allowing ourselves to trust Jesus in the many and varied directions our lives will unfold. And, when we feel fear rising up in our hearts, may we have the courage to turn to Jesus for reassurance and take the time to hear Him telling us once again: Do not be afraid!

Yours, in the joy of Christ,

Jax

Revd Jax Machin, Rector, The Downs Benefice

Collect Prayer for the Third Sunday after Trinity

Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin
and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts
whereby we call you Father:
give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,
that we and all creation may be brought
to the glorious liberty of the children of God;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.



Luke 10: 1-11; 16-20 - Jesus Sends Out the Seventy-Two

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near. Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.'

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.'

He replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'

Schedule of Services

Now that all national Coronavirus restrictions have been lifted, it is no longer necessary to book seats in our parishes for services. Neither is it mandatory for you to wear masks in church. However, Coronavirus is still very much with us. There are a number of people in our villages with it at present, so we are encouraging people to observe social distancing measures.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>3rd July</i>	Morning Prayer		4pm – Café Church (<i>in the Church Room</i>)		
<i>10th July</i>			Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
<i>17th July</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Worship	6pm – Peace & Wholeness	8am – Holy Communion (BCP)	
<i>24th July</i>			Morning Prayer	Morning Worship	8am – Holy Communion (BCP)
<i>27th July</i>			Mid-week Holy Communion		
<i>31st July</i>		5 th Sunday Benefice Holy Communion			