**Sermon Matthew 9-35 to 10-8 2020 CCSV**

**Come back with me 2000 years – to the land of the Jews-the ‘promised land’- but sadly- a land without any real promise right now…..they still have a King-but he’s a puppet under the control of a Governor- appointed by a foreign power….they still have their religion-but they get little help by the arrogant Scribes and Pharisees-or from the Priests and Sadducees in the Temple**

**….directly or indirectly- taxes are so heavy -that thousands of farms-wineries-and sheepfolds- are now owned by greedy absentee landlords- their former owners reduced to being day**

**Labourers- barely making a living for their families. Over it all are the harsh- and oppressive Roman occupiers. The ordinary people are harassed and downtrodden-distressed- without any leadership- like sheep without a shepherd. In the past there have been leaders spring up- but they have been political revolutionairies- and they have been quickly- and brutally crushed by the Roman Legionaires.**

**++ Then- to these common people- yearning for a leader that will inspire them-and give them hope-comes a carpenter from Nazareth-named Jesus. So much suffering-so much human need-with care and compassion- he responds to their despair. For months he treks around the Galilee area-from village to village-town to town-synagogue to synagogue….teaching and proclaiming the Kingdom of God’s love-and with the power of the Spirit of God- healing every disease and infirmity- both mental and physical. Most of the people don’t really understand the purpose of his message- but they loudly welcome the actions that accompany it….who wouldn’t shout for joy when your deformed legs instantly were healed and you could walk for the first time in your life? He’s exciting-he’s inspiring- he’s warm and caring…… at least for the moment-bringing sunlight to the dark clouds of a hurting people.**

**++ It doesn’t take long for Jesus to gain the reputation of someone you should go and see – with a growing reputation -he attracts big crowds -and in his travels has built up a small group of followers. *But it’s a one man show !* He realizes this-and sees the need for more workers to help him. He takes a great leap of faith -calling twelve of his followers to be a special team -to be co-workers in his ministry. The time has come when they must be apostles -as well as disciples. A ‘disciple’ is a learner…an apostle is someone sent out to do a specific task.**

**++ I can just hear him saying to his 12 newly appointed apostles “ Believing in me and listening to my preaching and teaching- being secure under my banner of love and spiritualty- isn’t enough. I have chosen you to do more- to be active servants to all those in pain, suffering, and distress-to battle with me against the forces of evil- that are working against God-and making my people miserable. I need you to really help me.**

**+++I want you to go out on your own- to the towns and their synagogues-and do exactly what I’ve been doing….preaching repentance-and that the Kingdom of God is near- teaching them what that means- but most important-demonstrating that message by healing every disease-every sickness-by serving the people with love and practical care.”**

**++ We need to think about this- carefully-because this is no simple mission Jesus is asking-of 12 ordinary men with little training- let me repeat what scripture says: “ ….proclaim the good news, ”The Kingdom of Heaven has come near”, cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons…”**

**That’s what they were directed to do-and-surprisingly-they did it. Because Jesus didn’t send them out empty-handed- he gave them a special gift- the gift of his own authority and power-**

**the guaranteed assurance- that the powers of God’s Holy Spirit**

**were also theirs to use. God’s people were hurting-they needed**

**to be assured of his love and care-and as followers and believers of Jesus-with Spirit Power-they were responsible for filling that need.**

**+++ Today-many of God’s people are hurting- a hurting which has been recently brought out of hiding into the open -because they are being denied the right to be truly and freely human as God created them……for a variety of reasons-the colour of their skin- is a barrier to being treated equally as one of God’s children. And we- brown-black-or white-as the Jesus believers of today-are expected by the Lord to do something about it. Like those early disciples- I know that’s not going to be easy**

**++Allow me to share three personal stories. + In my third year of university- once a week- I played bridge with a small group.**

**I wanted to invite them to my parent’s home for dinner and bridge. When my mother heard that one of them was black from Africa- she said absolutely NO. I remind you that my parents had emigrated to Canada -from Barbados- 20 years previously. + A few years later-Audrey and I were partners with a school principal- running a pre-teen program in his school in a low income area of Halifax. Every Friday night- Fifty to seventy-five boys and girls- black and white….games-handicrafts-dramatic skills-painting-and dancing….mixing together. When the evening was over-and the kids left the school- at the corner-the whites went one way-the blacks another-never any group walking home together. In a supervised program -mixing was OK…but at night-unsupervised-the white parents denied their kids any interaction with their black friends.**

**++You can say that was seventy years ago- things are better now. And it would seem that way-as people of all colours work and shop here in Scarborough…and worship together at Christ Church Scarborough village….but all of the 300 residents**

**living in my apartment building are white. And my lawyer son tells me there are few successful blacks in the legal/justice system. I guess racial discrimination is still mostly hidden from view…..if you’re white like me-and I’m not apologizing for my colour- because it wasn’t my choice.**

**+++ I don’t have any answers-except perhaps to wish that Jesus would ‘zap’ us all into shape -as he did with St. Paul. But I do know-that at our baptism-we were given that same gift-that same authority-that same power- that same Holy Spirit-**

**to be apostles as well as disciples- to be sent out into the world**

**to deliver the message of Jesus-to proclaim God’s Kingdom of love- and demonstrate with action -that peace and justice is part of his message ….so that at least some of the hurts of our brothers and sisters-of all colours-will be healed. And it can happen- as history has proven. Some 50 years ago-Christians from churches around the world-prayed a lot-spoke out a lot-acted a lot in many different ways-large and small-with determination- and belief in the work of the Holy Spirit-**

**made change happen- and apartheid in South Africa was defeated.++ I pray that in however the Holy Spirit directs-I can be an active member of Jesus’ team- an apostle of love- today and tomorrow-one day at a time. AMEN**