

Call to worship: Isaiah 12: 2

Surely God is my salvation;  
I will trust, and will not be afraid,  
for the Lord God is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.

Hymn StF 11

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:  
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,  
casting down their golden crowns around  
the glassy sea;  
cherubim and seraphim falling down  
before thee,  
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness  
hide thee,  
through the sinful human eye thy glory  
may not see,  
only thou art holy; there is none beside  
thee,  
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
All thy works shall praise thy name in  
earth and sky and sea;  
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!  
Reginald Heber

Prayers of Praise and Confession

Loving God, we praise you. Your love for us is constant and sure: strong, to endure for ever; great, to absorb the follies and errors of our ways; patient; to care for us in the tiny details of everyday life.

Glorious Jesus, we praise you. Your life in us is constant and sure: powerful, to deal with evil; caring, to hold us in your prayer; healing, to draw us nearer to God.

Joyous Spirit, we praise you. Your grace in us is constant and sure: steadfast, assuring us God will not change; challenging, calling us to a better hope; sustaining, the seal of an everlasting covenant.

Gracious God – Father, Son and Spirit – we give you thanks and praise. Amen.

Guiding God, you are always more ready to listen than we are to pray. We confess our reluctance to ask of you those things that would enable us to live at peace with you and with ourselves. Because we are afraid of what you might ask us to do we have not asked what your will is for us. When you have not answered our prayers in the way we expected we thought you were not listening. Forgive us for our selfishness and pride and help us to open ourselves once again to your cleansing and renewing Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask. Amen.

Lord's Prayer – please pray in whichever version or language you prefer

## Introduction

In this time between Easter and Pentecost, we focus on the witnessing of the disciples and followers of Jesus, throughout his ministry. This gives us ideas and direction for our own mission, personally and through the church. The reading from Luke's Gospel is about the seventy (or seventy-two) people that were sent by Jesus and gives us a template for our times.

## Hymn StF 548

Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine:  
O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;  
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood:

*This is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Saviour all the day long.  
This is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Perfect submission, perfect delight,  
visions of rapture burst in my sight;  
angels descending bring from above  
echoes of mercy, whispers of love:

Perfect submission, all is at rest,  
I in my Saviour am happy and blest –  
watching and waiting, looking above,  
filled with his goodness, lost in his love:

Frances Jane van Alstyne

## Reading: Luke 10: 1 – 12, 17 – 20

**10** After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup> He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup> Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup> Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. <sup>5</sup> Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" <sup>6</sup> And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup> Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. <sup>8</sup> Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup> cure the sick who are there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." <sup>10</sup> But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> "Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near." <sup>12</sup> I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

<sup>17</sup> The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' <sup>18</sup> He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. <sup>19</sup> See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

Almighty God, we thank you because you have called us into the fellowship of your church and for the love and support we find among your people. We thank you for binding us together in the love of Christ and for giving us a shared task. Help us always to be obedient to your will. In the name of Jesus our Saviour, Amen.

### Hymn StF 255

The kingdom of God  
is justice and joy,  
for Jesus restores  
what sin would destroy;  
God's power and glory  
in Jesus we know,  
and here and hereafter  
the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God  
is mercy and grace,  
the prisoners are freed,  
the sinners find place,  
the outcast are welcomed  
God's banquet to share,  
and hope is awakened  
in place of despair.

The kingdom of God  
is challenge and choice,  
believe the good news,  
repent and rejoice!  
His love for us sinners  
brought Christ to his cross,  
our crisis of judgement  
for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come,  
the gift and the goal,  
in Jesus begun,  
in heaven made whole;  
the heirs of the kingdom  
shall answer his call,  
and all things cry glory  
to God all in all!

Bryn Rees

### Reflection

We hear often in the Gospels and in Acts about the twelve disciples and maybe some extra followers, the one-on-one interactions that would help us understand that the movement that Jesus espoused was growing. We, of course, know about the feeding of the five thousand and the groups that gathered every time Jesus healed or taught, but this passage from Luke's Gospel gives us a better idea of the depth of feeling of these new followers. Jesus chooses seventy (or seventy-two) people who not only have the skills for a mission task but also have the time and wherewithal to embark on a journey through the country, stay a while and return to report back. If this doesn't include the original twelve disciples it means that there is a sufficiently large pool of people to choose from, who understand enough of the scriptures and Jesus' new Way, are articulate enough to tell others, and robust enough to take whatever happens to them.

So now we have a group of people prepared and keen to talk, that have their own means to take time from work and families being sent out with very specific instructions. They are to go to 35 or 36 separate towns and villages where Jesus intends to go in his future ministry to see if he would be welcomed there or not, so as, I assume, to not waste his valuable and short timescale. But they are told not to talk to people on the way, they must be focussed on their destination. And they are told not to take anything to help them on their journeys, so they arrive humbly and in need themselves. And, perhaps most importantly, they arrive bringing peace to the household where they will stay.

This may or may not be well received and so they are told how to deal with each situation, knowing that it is unlikely that either way will be easy. And they set out bravely, with probably strength and trepidation in equal measure. But they were soon back, all of them, it seems, with joy in their hearts from positive experiences, and Jesus encourages them in their future missions.

We have no idea who they were, or what they went on to do. Whether these are people who will reappear in later stories, or they quietly support the cause. They may have been there on Palm Sunday in Jerusalem. They may have been there after the resurrection when the Apostles received the Holy Spirit. It may have been from amongst this group of people that the replacement apostle for Judas was chosen. We don't know, we are unlikely to ever know, but it doesn't matter. They knew who they were, Jesus knew them and trusted them and their names are written in heaven.

So what can we take from this? To me it serves to remind us that we each have a task, a mission, to fulfil, that Jesus has chosen us for, that will fit our gifts and skills. That our journey may not be easy, and we may not get the reaction we want, but we will be able to deal with whatever happens. And we can, mission fulfilled, return to Jesus with joy in our hearts and our names will be written in heaven, even if the world does not know who we are, God does, and to God we are important, we are worthy, we are loved and we are saved by the blood of Christ. So we must never think we are ineffectual, insignificant, because, through Jesus, we are important enough to prepare the way for him to come into the lives of others, into the dark and difficult places, into the welcoming places, and find a home. We all have our part to play, may we do so to the best of our abilities.

### Prayers of Intercession

Almighty God, forgive us that, when we pray, we expect you to do as we say. Give us humility in prayer, acknowledging that we are not worthy to ask anything of you. And when our prayers seem not to be answered, at least in the way we want, help us to trust your wisdom and accept your will. Keep us faithful to you, never doubting your power, and ready to be your servants in all things. Amen.

### Hymn StF 564

O thou who camest from above  
the pure celestial fire to impart,  
kindle a flame of sacred love  
on the mean altar of my heart!

There let is for thy glory burn  
with inextinguishable blaze,  
and trembling to its source return,  
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
to work, and speak, and think for thee;  
still let me guard the holy fire,  
and still stir up thy gift in me –

Ready for all thy perfect will,  
my acts of faith and love repeat,  
till death thy endless mercies seal,  
and make the sacrifice complete.

Charles Wesley

### Blessing

Go out into the world in the power of the Spirit to proclaim God's love and truth. Amen.

