

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B) 15th JULY 2012

We are reading St. Mark's Gospel in instalments each Sunday.

In last week's episode we heard how Jesus was rejected in his own village, so in today's episode we find out what he did next. St. Mark tells us that he made a tour of the surrounding villages. Then for some unexplained reason he decides that rather than go round with his twelve disciples as a group it would be better to send them out in pairs

The advantage was that more villages would hear the Gospel; the disadvantage was that the disciples would have to manage in pairs on their own.

Jesus gave the disciples instructions before they set off. He told them to take absolutely nothing with them – no food, no money, no spare clothing. They would have to rely entirely on the hospitality.

Someone tried this recently by setting out to walk as a pilgrim from his home town in England to Rome. He did not even make it to Dover – no one would give him anything.

So what use is today's Gospel?

It is a good rule to think that the Bible is never just history.

We do not say "The history of the Lord" at the end of our readings.

We say "The Word of the Lord" or "The Gospel of the Lord".

Scripture is God guiding our own lives. The Gospel is good news for us now.

Our baptism and confirmation makes us his disciples now. We are listening to our instructions, but the man who tried to walk to Rome shows us that we cannot take these instructions literally.

They worked for the first disciples because local people were used to travelling religious teachers and felt a duty to support them.

It may be so in some countries now, but it is no longer part of our culture.

The Refresh 2012 team are asking for accommodation for Christian visitors who will be helping them during the Olympic Games. They will probably get offers but only when arranged in advance. They are not expecting people to welcome Christian visitors unannounced.

So why is today's Gospel good news for us?

Jesus is telling us how to be better disciples and to avoid frustration and disappointment in our Christian vocation.

There are two points.

Firstly, the Gospel is telling us that if Jesus is calling us to go and do something special we must waste no time. His call is top priority

When we go away how much time do we take with our packing?

Many people cannot go anywhere without a car because they need to take so much with them. This means they have to prepare the car as well as pack.

This not only takes time but it uses our mental energy.

If we are thinking about what we need to take with us we cannot think about the purpose of our journey. Jesus says to the 21st century disciple: "Don't waste time packing. Take the basics and go. Concentrate on your vocation. Trust me."

The second point is that money and spare clothes give us a sense of security. We depend on them.

Jesus says to his disciples: "Depend on me. You need less than you think.

If the car is not ready, go without. It is possible. Do you really need spare things?

If you cannot find your mobile phone, go without it."

That's the ultimate test for the 21st century disciple.

Do we trust God enough to go away without our phones?

Rev Geoff Carey