

Molweni dear family and friends of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture: Matthew 10:1-7

Hymn: *How sweet the name of Jesus sounds*

This is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it. Please let us not be complacent about Covid-19. We are still in National Alert Level 3 and each of us is required to do our part to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Please keep calm. We pray to the Lord to guard us, protect us, to drive away our anxieties, fears and fright amidst confusion and complexity. In today's gospel we are called as junior partners with Our Lord to take action to serve others by speaking a good word or doing a good deed to calm the fear and fright of those affected and infected by the Coronavirus.

We see ourselves among the twelve in today's gospel. Like them, we are chosen, called, and commissioned by Jesus. Among them are fishermen with the impetuous Peter; James and John hot heads and ambitious; tax collector Matthew and the treacherous Judas who would betray Jesus. Jesus commissions them and sends them out to proclaim the good news of the gospel. Every vocation remains both a gift and a mystery. It is a gift because the one who is called is never worthy of the gift but can only humbly receive it. It is a mystery because it is wrapped in God's unfathomable love. We receive this gift at our Confirmation...I quote from An Anglican Prayer Book, pg. 390 "*In Confirmation we come to be filled, through the laying on of hands, with the power of the Spirit for worship, witness and service*".

Jesus draws an essential connection between his preaching of the kingdom and the healing of the whole person. The context for his sending out of the disciples is his distress at the state of the crowds who have come to him with many needs. They are described, in Matthew 9:36, as "*harassed and helpless*". This would be a fair description of the many occupants in our hospital beds at this time of Covid-19. New treatments, new drugs, new approaches are being pioneered all of the time. Such breakthroughs take time and energy. Morale is running low and frustrations are running high. Many Health care practitioners and medical support staff are on the edge of burn out. We do not have adequate words to thank them for choosing this vocation. The clergy, family and friends cannot be at the bedside of the patient in hospital but health care practitioners are treating our loved ones as fully human beings, combining physical and inner healing to ensure maintenance of their dignity in trying circumstances. Thank you for not reducing patients to "cases" defined by their medical problem rather than as a person, an individual. Usually family, friends and clergy would see to their emotional and spiritual needs but during this pandemic no hospital visits are allowed. Our loved ones are being left in your gentle, loving, holy, healing hands. In this expression of sincere gratitude, we include from the cleaners to the professors and everyone in between. You have families at home, many of you depend on public transport and yet you have that inner knowing that you are not doing it all by yourself; you admit your dependence on God's mercy, love and protection. None of us underestimate your influence, kindness and generosity. You will be remembered long after the storm of Covid-19 has passed for being in the heart of the crisis.

Jesus is addressing us today, to support the families of hospital patients, to watch over them. They may need shopping done, meals to be delivered to the door, a phone call, a prayer, a listening ear. They may be feeling detached and weighed down as they are faced with only having the lifeline of a phone call from the hospital to receive a daily report of patients, loved ones, who cannot be visited. To preach the kingdom is to offer healing to the **whole** person. The power to do this can only come from Christ himself. In Psalm 100:1, the Psalmist invites us to serve the Lord with gladness. This gladness comes from within us where God dwells. Let us serve with a smile and not with sighing. God will bless us with all that we need. To serve is to love and we love our God. When we serve others we are serving Jesus, face to face.

The Church has always been involved with physical as well as spiritual healing. We know that mind, body and spirit interact all the time. Let us ensure that we treat our sisters and brothers as whole people, precious in their totality, not just the bits that we can cope with. Our work is to bring Christ's wholeness to all people, regardless of difference, becoming his true disciples, bringing the kingdom to all those we meet, especially the *"harassed and helpless"*. Our work is to **share** Jesus' ministry of healing and not just be **onlookers**.

In closing, I invite you to again participate in the Diocesan Service of Healing and Prayer during a time of Covid -19. Your clergy have copies of the YouTube as well as whatsapp audio of the service or you will find it on our website.

Today **please reach out** to the families of health care practitioners, medical and other hospital support staff.

We continue to **pray** for medical staff in hospitals, clinics and day-hospitals, doing their utmost to bring relief to those who have the virus and suffer all forms of illnesses. We bless you, O God, for their sacrifice in making themselves vulnerable for the sake of others. Bless and heal doctors, nurses, therapists and others, who in their care for those suffering with the coronavirus, have themselves contracted it. Bring them complete healing. Bless all engaged in medical research for this virus and other modern diseases that continue to diminish the quality of life of a great many people. **Lord in your Mercy. Hear our Prayer**

I am, Because We Are, Because God is ... Opening hearts to heal God's world. *Shine through the dark clouds.*