

## SERMON

Ezekiel 2:1-5

I am Sending You

Nunawading and Waverley, 4-7-21

There was a lady whose husband had died. She had two grown up daughters. At the funeral her daughters were terribly distraught, for their father was not that old, in his late fifties. For me, the saddest thing was that they had no hope. Years ago, a pastor could visit the bereaved because some people were open to the word of God at the time of a funeral. We talked about the gospel, the hope of salvation, what Christ had done to bring us life. Later, she began attending services regularly. I remember her saying, "I wish I had concentrated on the Christian faith when my children were young." But it is never too late as it was not too later for her to return to her Saviour.

We are close to people who go through all the ups and downs of life but they do not know the purpose of existence, the grace of the Lord, how one is accountable for the use of one's life, where victory is found in tragedy and the power to forgive others just as we are fully forgiven by the Lord. As the Lord appointed Ezekiel, so he appoints us with the same words: **I am sending you**. Jesus spoke these very words to his disciples after the resurrection: **As the Father sent me, so I send you**.

I am sending you, the Lord said to Ezekiel. Then he outlined the kind of people he was sending him to: **I am sending you to the people of Israel who are like rebellious non-Jews, they and their ancestors. They have transgressed against me to this very day. The people are obdurate and have set their hearts against me**. I would hate that being in my letter of call; Nunawading and Waverley are total back sliders who refuse to listen to God's word. You will be attacked if you speak and all you will get is hatred and insults. That would not be an attractive assignment. This is what Ezekiel faced. The people had transgressed what they had agreed to follow in the covenant.

They had blocked their ears and hardened their hearts to the gospel yet the Lord persisted in reaching out to them.

It would be easy to say that this is what Australia is like. The latest McCrindle research paints a different picture. There is an anti-Christian narrative in our public media yet the majority of Australians are spiritually hungry. I was talking to my neighbour about being pressed for time but we took the afternoon on my day off for a winter picnic and then some shopping and everything went well, with sunshine and sales in the stores. She replied, "It was meant to be". A lot of Australians believe that there is something guiding and blessing their lives. Australians are not as hard as stone and it would be useless trying to plant seed amongst such rocky ground. This is what McCrindle said:

...Australians are looking for more meaning than ever – they're searching for purpose, they're looking for certainty or direction in these uncertain times, they're spiritually open and they're looking for community more than ever before and for a local expression of that community

During the pandemic a lot of people have been asking themselves, "Do I like the way I am living and do I like the way I am working?" These are deep questions. I remember a doctor telling me about her work-load. She was a seeker and came to worship now and again. She drove a BMW, which is irrelevant but I envied her, especially when I was driving a rusted-out HQ Holden. She said, "I wonder what it is all for. I work incredibly hard, have lots of money yet I wonder whether it is worth it." These are questions that our Lord Jesus tackled. Remember how he said, **Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.** The Father is sending us because we hold out the chance for others to know him. Once in a deep relationship with him, life undergoes an exciting change.

The wondrous thing about the Lord is that he never gives up on people, no matter how confused or stubborn they may be. Someone who says the whole thing is a myth could be the person who comes to Christ. Our loving Father is willing to try over and over again. His door is always open and he keeps issuing an invitation to come; **come, for all things are now ready.** Hence, he uses us. He gives the words on his lips to us and the unlimited compassion in his heart he pours into us so that we have everything we need when he says, **I am sending you.**

Who else is going to do this? Society can meet a person's financial needs, provide employment, health and education. Sport is well and truly organized. What about the Spirit and the deep spiritual need for meaning, how to meet evil, how to find love and properly love, where a moral foundation can be found, what can heal politics and bring reconciliation to our community? If we are not there, who will show people the way? And so, our Lord says, **I am sending you** and I am going to back you up with everything I have.