

Mark 6

The True Shepherd of Israel

Vision Sunday

Reading: Derek Eastwood

Next week Anniversary Sunday.

Using today as a vision Sunday. To get our sights clear.

Three things I want everybody to do. Besides coming on a Sunday
Three things. For Everybody who is part of the church family.

Everybody Pray

- Pray this vision we are talking about this morning into being. And next Monday 14th prayer gathering will be Prayer for Brighton – including Westdene. 8.00 – 9.30 in the MYR. Pray up a storm for Brighton. Everybody pray

Second thing for us all to do.

Everybody Help Out.

- We are not a staff heavy church. We don't have a caretaker, we don't have a worship leader, we don't have an administrator, we don't have a verger. And actually I wouldn't have it any other way because this way we use the everybody's resources and time and skill. To quote the chancellor of the exchequer – "we're all in this together".

So everybody pray, everybody help out.

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Everybody Give

- I'll talk more about this next week and Edward may say something later, but everybody, however much or however little, to give monthly by standing order. Because visions cost money of course they do. And we've got people who give £2 a week and people who give a lot more than that. So if you

want to be part of the vision for everybody to resource it in that way. To give as little and as much as they are able.

So Mark chapter 6: 6

Listen to Luke 10:1-4 keep that open. Refer to it in a moment.

Pray

Thank you for the vision you have set before us for this church at this point in time. Would you awaken our hearts for what you have for this coming year and how we can give heartily to it. Amen.

We have a vision, **“to make followers of Jesus Christ... to build a church that is good news to our community”**.

It's worth thinking through that together as a church. A church that is good news to our community.

Brighton is an extraordinary city.

I came across this article last year: “Is Brighton Britain’s hippest city? A penchant for alternative free thinking, non conformist attitudes, tolerance, pubs open til 1am...”

One of Br’s distinctions, although the local tourist office doesn’t talk about it is that it is the drug-injecting capital of the UK. And has been for 9 years.

The Argus recently said that Brighton’s A&E has the highest count of drug and alcohol admissions of any hospital in the South East.

There are 53000 hazardous drinkers in the city. A quarter of the city’s pop over ages of 16 and 2500 heroine injecting citizens. The most hazardous part of the city of the ward of north laine and st peters. Well that is not us, but it is our city. It is on our doorstep.

And what of Westdene?

We have a vision. We are on a mission to be good news to our community.

To see these streets safe, relationships restored, addictions addressed, the lonely loved, to have families secure, elderly cared for, the peace, the good news and the love of Jesus everywhere.

And we're on pretty safe ground with a vision like that. Because it is the same vision as Jesus has.

In Luke at the beginning of his ministry Jesus says: "The spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, procure freedom for the prisoners, recover sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

In Mark the language is a little different, Mark is just so concise.

1:14-15

"The time has come, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news."

And in ch2-5 as we have seen Jesus is doing just that. Bring life to people, to set people free, and he gets to ch6 and realises it is a rather big job to do on his own so he sends the 12 out and they go and help and he gives them the authority to do that.

And in Luke we read he goes why don't we get a few more people involved – so he sends out 72 to do the same vision. Because he says the harvest is so plentiful, it is just the workers that are few at the moment, we could do with a few more.

Understand today, vision Sunday, as an invitation for us to play a part in a great harvest.

For any of us to access, to engage to play our part in this vision there are three things we can all do.

1) Be dynamic.

God moves his kingdom forward bit by bit. Seeds are sown. He is a dynamic god and his command to his people is always to go. He sent the 12 out. Go.

It is also to come. He had says come follow me. Come and be forgiven, filled with the spirit, belong in my father's kingdom. Come and Go.

And here v.7 Calling the 12 to him. Come closer. He sent them out two by two.

Why go?

Because the harvest plentiful.

Not – thank you for coming, and offering, but we're quite small, we've just employed a families worker, so it's all covered, and right not, the pickings are slim out there anyway, so we'll let you off.
NO!

It is not that it is – Jesus sends them out (as we learn in Luke) because there is a huge harvest. Ripe, ready, waiting for as many of us as possible to gather it in.

□ Down on the seafront, they put out deck chairs whether or not someone wants to sit in them. Mug like me comes along – sit – they ask for £5. They are getting ready each morning for a harvest.

So should we here.

We've done our first two

Friendship lunches first month – 9/10, second month 15/16? At some point we're going to start advertising. At this point we don't know how many people there are out there who are lonely and would value a hot meal and company.

Holiday club: first year 15 – second year 38 – third year a similar number then we unfortunately changed the timing. But we were concerned, could we cope with more than 45. No probably not. But we changed the timing last year and it didn't work out so well. Same with the BBQ. But if we get the timing right again next year. There are people who are interested. If only we can be organised and ready to meet them.

If you begin to see this you see the vision of a church needs everybody.

□ Harvest time on a farm is crazy time. It is all hands to the deck so you don't lose any of the crop.

And a church needs this kind of readiness too. That says – I won't go on annual leave, I'll stay home at weekends, I'll work morning noon and night to get in this harvest to take up a dynamic posture with regard to the vision.

And over the next six months there will be opportunities that you can take up – in childrens work. Emma – Tuesdays looking for workers. Friendship Lunches – Thursdays. Building – Spring Clean (more) – using building sto the glory of God. Each area of our church life has a vision of its own. And will have opportunities for you to GO.

When he told the 12 to go he didn't tell them go, he told them how to go. And where to go, and what to take and what to say. And

we're getting organised so that you can know the specifics of the opportunities here. To find your way of being dynamic in this vision.

That the Sunday school time might – potentially the best hour of their week, buildings – fix up this building to the glory to God, elderly – friendship that points to Jesus, Other – what skills interests do you have....

Wouldn't it be great if our conversation over coffee were filled with chat about this. When we jet together not just – how are you doing. – but how is your area of service going?

Let's be dynamic.

Second:

2) Be Devoted.

v.8-9 take nothing for the journey...

what is this it sounds mean – rude of him saying – be focussed.

Nothing is ever more important than this vision. So don't dilute the impact your life could make by being distracted on the road. Be lightweight and flexible so you can go anywhere and do anything.

I love what Francis Chan says in “crazy love”

“Forget about god's will for you life. God cares more about your response to him today than what you intend to do for him next year in fact the decisions we make next year will be profoundly affected by our actions today..”

Bishop Lindsay Urwin (ex Horsham)

Was visiting Brighton last year is like tarmac very hard ground. The culture is fickle. It is promiscuous. What it needs in this place is

people of real spiritual backbone, who will get stuck in, devoted dedicated. Probably right? In a transient city as ours.

Every one of us has a choice about whether we will be distracted from the vision. Or devoted to something significant.

□ spotlight: need stories of what you are doing – off the fence, red cross, counselling, need to hear some stories of how you are going into our city to serve. Why because it encourages the rest of us who are serving to keep going.

We each of us, have an opportunity to make a serious difference in our city and in our neighbourhood. And this vision is not only important it is urgent.

We're not offering one religion among many which may have a gentle effect on one or two people's lives, we are holding out hope for a generation.

Don't linger on lesser things. When this great call is upon us.

If you want to be part of this vision please be dynamic, devoted and thirdly delighted.

3) Be delighted

Because all this work is going to be very worthy, but is it going to be any fun? Oh yes.

v30 return triumphant. All they had done and taught. Stoked. An amazing experience. Why because they were bringing Jesus' good news.

Does the good news of Jesus to this community, the raising of £x,000 next week. Does it depend on your and me? Yes or no. Yes and no.

On one hand we've got to do the going, to be dynamic and devoted, and costly. Mark links this story with the previous story the rejection of Jesus in his home town, and the following story the rejection of John the Baptist by king Herod.

But at the same time it is his harvest field. It is his kingdom. He is the Lord of the harvest.

The kingdom of God is near. He gave them authority – even demons were driven out and people were healed.

These Disciples are deeply inexperienced, provoundly inadequate to the task. Lambs amongst wolves, Jesus calls them, little children. What chance have they got, but he sends them out and they come back and they say to him – you are never going to believe what just happened.

And Jesus takes them aside and wants to spend time with them. He must have been mightily relieved – he has taken a heck of a risk sending this lot out. And they're praying for healing, working miracles, setting people free, proclaiming Jesus. This vision depends on Jesus. The kingdom of God is near. Jesus is coming.

In the feeding of the 5000. Jesus says YOU give them some food? Really Jesus what are you talking about. And Jesus provides.

And that is what gives us a certain ease and simplicity, fun, no pressure. In this great big hairy adventure.

That's what our Sundays are like and our small groups. We're like the 12 (or the 72) all week going out, not a bag or a purse or sandals between us, then there is a coming together, reporting full of joy and celebration, and tuning in to further instruction from Jesus, and then praying for one another, because there are wolves out there... not everywhere gives a welcome or wants to receive.

There are difficult places in which we have to operate during the week. And then we're ready to go again. But always keeping this sense of wonder and delight in it.

Why we have coffee after each service. So we can wander around and ask people where have you been doing your going this week. There are a few wolves out there aren't there, how's the harvest. Thank goodness our names are written in heaven. That kind of thing. Eh.

Finish.

When it comes to the vision

NT never pretends that it is other than a mad thing to think the church can change the world. But at same time it never says that anything else other than that is what is going to happen. Reason is for its confidence is Jesus. His victory on cross, kingdom of God, Paul – Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

If read Secular press – has the graph of church going one direction-down. So 30 yrs ago 11% of pop to church av 37. Today 6% av age 51. Plot a graph of terminal decline. 20-30 years church extinct.

Sec press haven't read history. That is not how it works.

200 years ago in this country church was a mess. Drinking, gambling, prostitution, country a mess. Then Wesley came and preached Jesus, then Wilberforce arose, saying we don't want to see this nation go to rack and ruin – let's do something about it - see the abolition of slavery, let's see reformation of manners (what he called the transformation of society) – Robert Raikes, let's reach the children no children in churches. Within 100 yrs 5.5 million children to church SS every week. Nation changed.

We are in same kind of sitn today. Either heading for extinction. We have a building and we have enough money to keep going for a couple of years. Or we way no it doesn't have to be like that. And over my dead body will it be like that. And I'm not living here in Brighton to be by the seaside, and come along to a church that I may or may not get involved with. But we are going to do everything we can to give our lives to see this city and this nation changed.

That is the vision.

Stand together.

Pray.