



Sermon

**by The Reverend Canon Andy Delmege,
Canon Missioner of Birmingham Cathedral**

Sunday 10 January

JSP Week 1: People – Out on the Streets

This is a significant day in the life of the Cathedral as we begin Jesus Shaped People together. JSP is the main thing we will be doing in the coming year. Over the next few months, we'll be looking deeply and intentionally at Jesus' teaching to his disciples. He was forming them to be the Church after he had gone, and we, the Church here now, should be doing our best to emulate him, to live out his principles. We'll do this through the Sunday sermons and in small groups on Zoom. There will be two groups, which cover the same ground. One on a Thursday afternoon from 1.30pm – 3pm; the other on a Thursday evening from 7.30pm – 9pm. These will be fun and practical – it would be great if you can give them a go. Not least, because we are so dispersed at the moment with the restrictions. We miss being able to talk to one another. Please contact me or enquiries for the Zoom link. And if you can't get to it all, don't worry; come to what you can. There is a JSP section on our website; it will have the sermon and a summary of what has happened in the Groups each week (<http://www.birminghamcathedral.com/followme/>).

So, let's begin! In our Gospel reading (Mark 3:1-12), Jesus has started his ministry. The response to him was huge – because of his passion for people. He longs for them to be whole in body, mind and spirit. He has set this out in his manifesto at his hometown synagogue in Nazareth:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.” (Luke 4: 18-19)

Jesus works this out in practice by meeting all kinds of people in all kinds of places: in the synagogues, in towns, in the countryside, in busy places, in lonely places. However crowded or under pressure, he always has time for people, and they are determined to come and find him.

Where might people find Jesus today? There is a lot of interest in spirituality in our society; and there seems to be evidence that people are turning to faith in the pandemic. The Church however seems to be in decline and is often a stumbling block for people. How, as a Church and as followers of Jesus can we connect more with people's spiritual hunger?

We will be exploring what this means for us over the coming weeks.

We can't easily go out to people at the moment, to do so puts their health at risk, but we are presented with the urgent and vital question of how we prepare ourselves for the reconstruction that will be needed after the pandemic. There will be a real hunger for social contact. How do we bring Jesus' passion that people find wholeness and healing into our city?

There are some clues in our Gospel passage. Firstly, we see the danger of 'preserving the institution' mattering more than caring for people. Jesus reminds us that the needs of people always come first. Secondly, Jesus moves from the Synagogue to the seashore. This is so that he can be in contact with more people. Obviously we are temporarily reducing our contacts, but how do we come into meaningful relationship with people at the moment? How will we in six or nine months? Thirdly, Jesus' main concern was to heal and release people: being in his Kingdom is to be with the source of personal well-being and wholeness. Why did Jesus have such a priority for healing, and what does this tell us about him? What does healing mean in this pandemic?

So, looking to us as the Cathedral community, the Cathedral family, how vital is it that we hear what local people feel about the church, both locally and more widely? We need to make sure that the status quo does not govern our mission priorities.

We need to make sure that we are at work within our community, not just giving a message that we want people to come to us. We need to look for the 'sea shore' of our community. It is focussed on 'their' territory, not 'ours'.

We need to believe that Jesus is with us. He is 'the same yesterday, today and forever'. The church is a channel, through which his work can be maintained. We need to believe that he can—and will—do his will through us.

If you can, join us in the small groups on Thursday – we will begin to explore this more practically and deeply. It is wonderful to be on this journey with you, one that can bring us light and love in such a hard time. Let's step out, praying that we may follow Jesus faithfully, and that JSP will make us ever more Christ-like.