



The Anglican Parish of Whangaparaoa Peninsula
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Gospel Proclamation 1st/21st Century

Isaiah 40:21—31; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

The Revd Ian Hardcastle
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In the gospel passage we see a snapshot of village ministry as Jesus and his disciples started going about Galilee. He had just taught in the local synagogue (vv21-28) he comes out and meets a sick person, Peter's mother-in-law, and heals her. She was lying down with a fever, he takes her hand and raises her from the bed. The fever leaves her and she begins to serve them.

On Friday, Helen and I visited a friend in hospital with diverticulitis – a very painful condition of the gut. He was on IV antibiotics but each time he moved he winced or gasped and he said the lower abdomen was very tender. During the visit we prayed for him and commanded healing and for the pain to go. We prayed for about 2 minutes then asked him to check how it was. He said the pain had gone down from a level of 10 to about 7. So we prayed a second time and he reported there was no pain. He tried moving, twisting and prodding and declared he could not feel any pain, just a tenderness on pressing the site. He then got up and walked around still with no pain. Yesterday in the morning, he was put onto light foods, and when I asked him last night, there was still no pain. Praise the Lord!

Back to the gospel account, the people came to the house with lots of sick and the demon oppressed people. Jesus healed many and drove out many demons. Next morning, Jesus is up very early to pray by himself. Then he sets off for the next village. Such is the style of this phase of his ministry as he travelled throughout Galilee preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

When St Paul went out on his missionary journeys he also came to a town or village, preached for a while and moved on, leaving a deposit of faith and teaching with an initial group of believers. The passage from 1 Corinthians, is part of a discussion about his apostleship and his right to expect support from those he served. In spite of his right he had chosen to support himself by his trade of tentmaking. Now some were saying he couldn't be a proper apostle because he did not charge them for his teaching! However, Paul's desire is that nothing should stand in the way of the gospel reaching many people.

Our friend, Bishop Given, is in a similar position. He is a pioneer evangelist. Remember, that when he first went to the Kondo District, there were no local Christians. He and David Pearce from Taranaki who were both Church Army Officers, started going from village to village preaching the gospel. It is not an easy area to evangelise with the people followers of either animist religions or Islam. After two years, it was the act of helping a sick woman who had collapsed, taking her to hospital, giving blood for a transfusion, praying for her that opened the people up to the gospel. That David Pearce, a white, Christian man should give his blood to a black, Muslim woman amazed them.

What response might a person make to being healed? Peter's mother-in-law got up and served them. I don't think the point is household drudgery. I am sure Mark means us to realise that from being seriously ill

she was well enough to attend to their needs. I sure he means she was grateful and wanted to do something in response.

Actually I think there may be even more there. The tense of the verb signifies a continuing repeating action. The NIV translation conveys that by saying she “began to serve them.” Later, in the both Mark and Luke, we find a group of women followed Jesus and cared for him. Mark 15:41 “In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs.” The verb is the same *diakoneo*. It is reasonable to think Peter’s mother-in-law continued to care for Jesus and his disciples in their ministry rather than just serving dinner on this one evening.

Someone said to me, if you focus on healing you turn the church into a hospital and once people are better they will leave. I suggest Peter’s mother-in-law shows us that the appropriate response to being healed by Jesus is to follow him and serve him.

Have you ever received healing? If so, what is your response? Surely, it is gratitude and worship. Surely, you want to follow this God who intervenes so practically and positively in life. When he then invites you into his mission won’t anyone want to be in it with him?

When David and Given took the woman back to her village, the chief said, “Allah Akbar” – Allah is great! David responded, “No Jesus healed her – Jesus is Great!” She was wife of the village headman and as a result he and the whole village converted to Christianity. That was the breakthrough in evangelising in Kondoa. Other villages started to respond as well as the news spread.

I told you when we got back from the first trip to Kondoa, that I was struck by strong similarities to first century Church planting. They visit, preach, make some converts and then have to move on. Just as Jesus did; just as Paul did. Then later, they return to see how they are getting on and strengthen the people.

Saul of Tarsus gave up his reputation as a highly trained Pharisee to preach the gospel to the gentiles. Given Gaula gave up his appointment as Dean of the Theological College in Dodoma with a nice salary, to answer the call to be Bishop of the people he evangelised. It is not an exaggeration to say he is the apostle of Kondoa.

He knows the call to service - even service where there is no provision and few resources. He knows the call to preach the gospel. St Paul said, “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.” It is, I think, Given’s life text – I have often heard him quote it. Just as Jesus was urgent to move on and tell the next village the good news, so Given constantly presses on into fresh outreaches while supporting the existing Christians.

We have given an undertaking as a parish that we will contribute \$3,333 towards his stipend. You may remember when pressed he said he needs \$NZ15,000 p.a. Bishop Kito is giving \$5000, and originally three parishes agreed to meet the shortfall – hence the odd amount.

Last year, one of those parishes had to withdraw from that support. Between us and Rangiora parish, we covered the \$10,000 due to your and their generosity. I would like you to hear his response to that giving.

Here is the transcript of Helen’s interview with the Bishop:

H: Good morning, Bishop Given.

+G: Good morning, Helen.

H: Would you please talk about the importance of St Stephen’s contribution?

+G: St Stephen’s contribution is crucial and essential. We highly appreciate their support for us. My diocese cannot make any contribution to pay my stipend. Our [Diocesan] budget shows that we need \$5,000 a month but up to this time we are able to contribute \$NZ400 per month, which will only pay my P.S. [Personal Secretary] and one of our guards. This means that the majority of the people do not have any support from anywhere, so I am working hard to make sure the support is possible for other people especially for the other 5 workers.

We highly appreciate the contribution of St Stephen to support my stipend because their support means that we are able to get food on our table so that we can serve the church in this part of God’s

Kingdom. We highly appreciate their great and sacrificial giving for us. Woe to us if we do not preach the living Gospel which transforms the life of the people. Thank you so much for being part of our mission story, so that we can continue the growth of the church in this part of the world.

H: Thank you. And we'd love to know about your development plans for the future.

+G: We have a development plan of five years which ends in 2017. Our target is really to have 15,000 Christians in the Diocese. And now we are making sure that we strengthen the parishes. Currently we have 32 parishes, but we want to make them to be strong. When I came, we had 25 parishes but these parishes were not strong, they did not have many Christians. Most of the parishes maybe, 60% had 20 Christians, but we want the church to grow so that each parish can have at least 400 people. Our target is to have 30 parishes, strong ones, by 2017. Maybe 500 Christians each so that we can have really Christians that are mature – 15,000 by 2017.

We need to start collecting for this year's stipend for him, before his reserves get low and his family literally run out of food. So, would you consider your personal response to contribute to our parish target? Would you give by bank transfer or envelope? Take the envelope, pray about it and make your gift during the week or bring the envelope next week.

Bank donations should be to our special gifts account: 12-3084-0097535-07

Please fill in the bank reference fields as follows: | Your giving code | Bishop Given | Your name (optional) |