

Sermon & Small Group Study Guide



Summer Term 2022

Contents

Passage	Sunday Sermon	Page
Welcome		2
Small Group Purpose Statement		3
Introduction to Series		4
5 Marks of Mission: TELL (Acts 4: 1-22)	May 1 st	5-6
5 Marks of Mission: TRAIN (2 Timothy 3: 10 – 4: 8)	May 8 th	7-9
5 Marks of Mission: TEND (Matthew 14: 13-21)	May 15 th	10-11
5 Marks of Mission: TRANSFORM (Isaiah 58: 1-14)	May 22 nd	12-13
5 Marks of Mission: TREASURE (Isaiah 65: 17-25)	May 29 th	14-15
Queen's Platinum Jubilee & Pentecost – NO STUDY	June 5 th	N/A
3 in 1 and 1 in 3 (Ephesians 1: 1-14)	June 12 th	16-18
Children & the Kingdom of God (Matthew 18: 1-5 & 19: 13-15)	June 19 th	19-20
Windrush Sunday & FHFJ (Jeremiah 29: 1-7)	June 26 th	21-22
Yahweh Rapha: The Healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5: 1-19a)	July 3 rd	23-25
Yahweh Rapha: The Healing of a Blind Man (John 9: 1-11)	July 10 th	26-27
Yahweh Rapha: The Healing of Hezekiah (2 Kings 20: 1-11)	July 17 th	28-29
Yahweh Rapha: The Healing of a Dead Girl & a Sick Woman (Luke 8: 40-56)	July 24 th	30-32

Welcome to this new study guide for the summer teaching series.

This term we are not following one single theme throughout the term, but several mini-series. In May we are exploring 5 Marks of Mission which expound a biblical approach to the mission of the church in the world. In June we are taking a brief look at the Trinity, and the connection between children and the Kingdom of God, as well as celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Windrush Sunday combined with our annual thanksgiving for the Friends of the Heart Foundation of Jamaica. Then in July we will be focusing on God's healing ministry.

You may be holding this study guide because you are a member of a small group at St James. That's fantastic! Small groups are key to our strategy for nurture and discipleship, so we are delighted that you are in one. We hope you enjoy using this guide to prepare for your group meetings and then to explore the material together. Being in a small group is by far the best way to learn and grow as a disciple of Christ.

You may be holding this study guide as a member of St James who, for whatever reason, is *not* in a small group. You can find out more about small groups by reading the Small Group Purpose Statement on page 3 of this study guide. If you would like to join one, then please speak to Rob. If you can't manage that, then we don't want you to miss out on the benefits of the studies. Why not work through the studies yourself after each sermon or, better still, arrange to do them with a friend over a coffee.

The study guide is also available on the church web site – www.stjames-streatham.org

We have included some blank pages for sermon notes. Why not bring your study guide to church on Sunday morning or use it when you watch the service online at home. If you miss a sermon, you can always catch up by watching the recording of the livestream on our YouTube channel.

So, buckle up, here we go!

Small Group Purpose Statement

Small Groups at St James are small, Christ-centred communities meeting regularly for Bible study, fellowship, prayer, worship and service, fun, mutual support, accountability, and mission. Group members will encourage each other to grow as active disciples, rather than passive spectators, encourage others to join a group and support those who wish to grow in leadership.

Our expectation is that:

Group members will come to know the saving love of God in their lives more deeply as they pray and study the Bible together.

They will be mutually encouraged to become more like Jesus in every part of their lives.

Group members will support each other in prayer and keep all prayer requests confidential. They will come to trust each other and be accountable to each other for those things the Holy Spirit is prompting them to change in their lives.

Group members will share each other's practical needs and seek to provide what they can to meet them.

They will be encouraged to grow as active disciples rather than passive spectators.

Group members will encourage others to lead and join a group.



Introduction to the Series

Between 2001-2004 I had the enormous privilege of serving on the home staff of The South American Mission Society (SAMS). This role enabled me to meet many servants of God from Anglican churches in Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Paraguay and Chile. Almost all were, like me, Evangelical in theology and spirituality, with a passion and priority to preach the Gospel for the salvation of the lost. However, they understood the mission of the church in the world to be much wider than evangelism alone. They had a vision for *holistic* mission which addresses the needs of the whole person as an individual – mind, body and spirit - as well as seeking to transform the unjust structures of society and to care for God’s creation. This holistic understanding of mission is also shared by the church in Africa and Asia and so, some years ago, the worldwide Anglican Communion adopted what became known as the 5 Marks of Mission as a way of expressing this holistic mission:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Our mini-series in May will explore these 5 Marks of Mission under the headings: **TELL, TRAIN, TEND, TRANSFORM, TREASURE**, and ask how they might shape our mission here in Furzedown. In some ways they bring together many of the themes we have been exploring together as a church over the last few years, so hopefully this mini-series will reinforce what God has already been teaching us.

The, after a series of one-off studies in June, we will spend July looking at the theme of healing. God has many names and titles in the Bible, each of which gives us a glimpse of an aspect of His varied and perfect character. One of my favourites is ‘*Yahweh Rapha*’, which means *The LORD the Healer*, expressing God’s loving desire to restore broken bodies and souls to wholeness. Of course, not everyone is healed in this life, but we can be sure that those who love Jesus will enjoy the fullness of God’s healing in the life to come. In the meantime, every time we witness or experience healing in this life we see an inbreaking of God’s future kingdom into the present and an anticipation of the glory that is to come. As author Pete Greig put it:

“When miracles happen, we are granted a tantalizing foretaste of the new creation in which all things will conspire with unbounded complexity to perpetuate beauty and harmony for the glory of God.”

So, I hope and pray that this summer term will be an opportunity for us at St James to dig deeper into God’s word and to see just how wide and deep and long and high is God’s amazing, holistic, life-changing, world-transforming love in Jesus Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria



Study 1: The 5 Marks of Mission - TELL

Acts 4 v 1-22

Context:

We begin our exploration of the 5 Marks of Mission by looking at evangelism – sharing with others the good news about Jesus Christ, so that those who believe may be saved for ever. Jesus' final words to his disciples before his ascension focused on the urgent need to proclaim the Gospel in all the world. In his death and resurrection Jesus had done everything necessary for lost sinners to be saved – it was now up to his followers to take that good news and share it with anyone who would listen, regardless of class, colour, culture, or creed. The Book of Acts is the true story of how this began to happen and in today's study in Acts 4 we learn some valuable lessons on what it means to obey the first of the 5 Marks of Mission – to **TELL** others about Jesus. In the previous chapter, Acts 3, a lame man has been healed by Jesus through the ministry of Peter and John. Peter then preached about Jesus to the curious crowd that witnessed the once-lame man now walking and leaping and praising God. This caused a stir in Jerusalem and Acts 4 tells us what happened at the end of Peter's impromptu sermon.

Observation:

1. Who came up to Peter and John in v 1?
2. How were these men feeling and why (v 2)?
3. What did they do with Peter and John in v 3?
4. What impact did Peter's message have on the crowd (v 4)?
5. Who met together the following day (v 5-6)?
6. What was their first question to Peter and John in v 7?
7. By what power did Peter give his reply in v 8?
8. What explanation did Peter give in v 9-10 for the lame man's healing?
9. How is Jesus described by Peter in v 11?
10. What amazing truth does Peter state in v 12?
11. Why were the religious leaders astonished in v 13 and what did they take note of?
12. Why was there nothing they could say (v 14)?
13. What did they decide to command Peter and John in v 17 and why?
14. What was their response to this command in v 19-20?
15. Why did the religious leaders have difficulty deciding how to punish them (v 21-22)?

Meaning:

1. Why do you think Peter and John's message in Acts 3 gave such prominence to the resurrection of Jesus and why did the religious leaders find this so disturbing (v 2)?
2. On the other hand, many in the crowd believed the message and became followers of Jesus (v 4) – why do you think the preaching of the Gospel produced such different reactions? Does it still do this today?
3. Why does Luke, who wrote Acts, make special mention of the fact that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit (v 8)?
4. What do you think Peter's quote in v 11 from Psalm 118 v 22 means and why did he quote it in his response to the religious leaders' question in v 7?

5. What are the stunning implications of Peter's words in v 12? Why is salvation only found in Jesus and why is this claim so controversial, both then and now?
6. Why is v 13 both an encouragement and a challenge to us?
7. Why do you think the religious leaders stubbornly refused to believe, even though they couldn't deny that a miracle had happened (v 14-17)? Do you see this kind of stubborn refusal to believe today?
8. The Bible teaches that we should obey the authorities God has instituted in the world. So, how can Peter's words in v 19 be justified? What principle/s should guide our decisions about when we should obey and when we shouldn't?
9. Peter's words in v 20 suggest that his experiences of Jesus were so real and powerful that he couldn't stop himself telling others about Jesus even if he tried! How does this contrast with the way we often feel about the thought of sharing our faith and what does this tell us about how we can become bolder in telling others?

Application:

1. Looking at Peter's words in Acts 3 and 4, what would you say are the essential things to include in your message when you tell others about Jesus?
2. How can we make sure we are relying on the Holy Spirit rather than ourselves when we share the good news of Jesus with others?
3. How can we be both *respectful* and *bold* in telling people that Jesus is the ONLY way to salvation? What are the dangers/challenges of this and how can we overcome them?
4. The religious leaders took note that Peter and John had been with Jesus (v 13). How can we make sure we take time to be with Jesus?
5. What can we do to become more and more the kind of people who 'cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.' (v 20)?

Pray:

- Thank God for Jesus and the salvation that comes through him.
- Pray for the infilling of the Holy Spirit and a supernatural desire to tell others.
- Pray for God's grace and help to spend more time with Jesus.
- Pray for people known to you who don't yet know Jesus.

Sermon Notes:

Study 2: The 5 Marks of Mission - TRAIN

2 Timothy 3 v 10 – 4 v 8

Context:

When Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission in Matthew 28 v 19, before he ascended to heaven, he told them to go and make disciples of all nations. In our previous study we looked at the 1st Mark of Mission, which was all about evangelism, telling people the good news about Jesus so they can come to know him as their Saviour. However, knowing Jesus as Saviour is only the first step – Jesus told us to make *disciples* and a disciple is a life-long learner, a follower, an apprentice, someone whose whole life is being shaped by the life of Jesus. In other words, Jesus is to be our *Lord* as well as our Saviour. Hence, the 2nd Mark of Mission is **TRAIN**, and this is the theme of our study today as we read a short excerpt from Paul's second letter to his young apprentice, Timothy.

Observation:

1. What does Paul remind Timothy of in 3 v 10-11?
2. What does Paul say about Christians in 3 v 12?
3. What is the double fate of evildoers and imposters in 3 v 13?
4. In contrast, what does Paul encourage Timothy to do in 3 v 14 and why?
5. What had Timothy known from infancy and what was their purpose (3 v 15)?
6. What is the origin and nature of Scripture according to v 16 and what use does Scripture have?
7. What is the end-goal of Scripture according to 3 v 17?
8. What is the solemn nature of the charge Paul gives Timothy in 4 v 1?
9. What is this solemn charge according to 4 v 2?
10. Why is this solemn charge so important and urgent according to 4 v 3-4?
11. What does Paul urge Timothy to do in 4 v 5?
12. How does Paul describe his personal circumstances in 4 v 6?
13. How does he describe his life up to this point in 4 v 7?
14. What will be his (and our) reward according to 4 v 8?

Meaning:

1. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy because he had left him in charge of the fledgling new church in Ephesus and sadly the young church was being torn apart by false teachers who had arrived after Paul left and were leading some of the church members astray? In light of this situation, why do you think Paul encouraged Timothy to pay attention to Paul's own life and example in 3 v 10-11? From what you know of Paul's life in the New Testament, what encouragements and lessons would Timothy learn from looking at his example and how would this train him as a disciple of Jesus?
2. Why do you think Christians are persecuted (3 v 12)?
3. Having pointed to Paul's life and character as helpful source in training Timothy as a disciple of Jesus (see question 1 above), he now points to Scripture as another helpful source in this training process. Why do you think he emphasises the *people* who taught Timothy the Scriptures (3 v 14)? Why does it matter *who* teaches us the Bible? Who might have been Timothy's teachers in his infancy (see 1 v 5)?

4. In what way does the Bible make us 'wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus' (3 v 15)? Can you think of any specific passages or stories from the Bible which do this?
5. The phrase in 3 v 16 'God-breathed' literally means that God breathed out or exhaled the words of Scripture. What amazing and critical thing does this tell us about the origin and nature of the Bible and what difference should this make to how we treat it?
6. What do each of the 4 functions of Scripture mentioned in 3 v 16 mean and how do they serve the ultimate purpose mentioned in 3 v 17?
7. Why do you think Paul gives such a solemn introduction to his charge to Timothy in 4 v 1? How do you think this affected the way Timothy received and acted on it?
8. What is the 'word' Timothy should preach (4 v 2) and why was this so important?
9. What does it mean to be prepared to preach both in and out of season (4 v 2)?
10. What should be our attitude and approach to preaching according to the end of 4 v 2?
11. In what ways can you see 4 v 3-4 coming true today?
12. How do Paul's words in 4 v 7 serve as an apt description for the kind of life anyone who wants to follow Jesus should live?
13. How does 4 v 8 serve as the ultimate encouragement and motivation for us to follow Jesus?

Application:

1. In what ways do the lives of other Christians (dead or alive) serve as examples to train you in your life as a disciple?
2. In what ways does the Bible train you as a disciple? What means do you use to receive the teaching of the Bible and what challenges do you face in this?
3. Read James 1 v 22-25. What does this passage tell us about how the Bible trains us?
4. How can we be ready in and out of season to talk about Jesus to others?
5. How can we avoid the temptation to believe what our itching ears want to hear rather than what the Bible teaches? What are the challenges of this?
6. To what extent does the promise of eternal life (4 v 8) spur you on to live faithfully for Jesus in this life, no matter what the cost is?
7. Many Christians live with a sacred/secular divide in their lives – i.e. they think there are parts of their life that are sacred and matter to God, and other parts that are secular and don't matter so much to God. Do you think this is a biblical approach to life? How does the saying: '*Life is a peach not an orange*' help us to reconsider the classic sacred/secular divide?
8. One definition of being a disciple is: '*Someone who is learning to live the way of Jesus in their context at this moment.*' In what ways is this definition true for you? Are there any parts of your life (e.g. work, relationships, money) where you feel you need more training to be better equipped to be an effective disciple of Jesus?

Pray:

- Thank God for the example of godly people in your life.
- Pray for God's grace to spend time reading the Scriptures.
- Pray for God's grace to put what you read into practice.
- Pray for opportunities to speak about your faith to others, in and out of season.

Sermon Notes:



Life is a peach not an orange

Study 3: The 5 Marks of Mission - TEND

Matthew 14 v 13-21

Context:

One of the most striking qualities that we see in the ministry of Jesus is compassion. That word appears many times in the Gospels to describe the feelings and actions of Jesus as he is confronted by human need. In our culture we tend to think of the *heart* as the source of compassion. We speak of our *heart* being moved; we urge an unkind person to '*have a heart*'; and we talk of someone who is known for their kindness as *having a big heart*. In the Hebrew mindset, however, the source of compassion was to be found a little lower in the human body, in the *guts*! The Bible talks about Jesus' guts being moved at the plight of the least, the last and the lost, and his feelings of pity always led to actions of love and mercy. He calls on all who claim to be his followers to do the same today, hence this 3rd Mark of Mission – **TEND**. Part of the mission of every local church is to lovingly and practically tend to those who are in need, whether they are church members or not. It is both a challenge and a privilege, as we will see in today's study.

Observation:

1. What had Jesus heard about that caused him to withdraw by boat to a solitary place (v 13)?
2. What did the crowds do when they saw him leaving (v 13b)?
3. How did Jesus feel and what did he do when he landed and saw the crowd (v 14)?
4. Who came to Jesus and when in v 15?
5. What did they say to Jesus (v 15)?
6. How did Jesus reply to them in v 16?
7. What resources did they have to obey Jesus' command (v 17)?
8. What did Jesus say in v 18 and what did he do in v 19?
9. What were the outcomes of this miracle in v 20?
10. How many people were in the crowd that day (v 21)?

Meaning:

1. Bearing in mind the awful events of v 3-12, what do you think was in Jesus' mind and heart as he withdrew by boat in v 13? What do you think he was trying to avoid and what was he hoping for as he sailed away? Look also at Mark 6 v 31 for other clues.
2. Why do you think the crowds ran round the shore of the lake to follow Jesus (v 13b)? What were they looking and hoping for? See John 6 v 2 for clues.
3. Why is Jesus' reaction to the crowds in v 14 so amazing given what we have just learned above? Why does he react as he does? – see Mark 6 v 34 for clues. How would you have reacted in the same circumstances, honestly? What does this tell us about Jesus and about how we should be as his disciples?
4. How do the disciples show their concern for the crowds in v 15 and why do you think Jesus involves the disciples in providing the solution to the problem in v 16 and again at the end of v 19?
5. The disciples didn't have much to offer (v 17) and yet Jesus used what they had. Do you ever feel you don't have much to offer to serve Jesus or few resources to help those in need? How can this true story encourage us when we feel inadequate?
6. What is the significance of the fact there were 12 baskets of left overs (v 20)?

Application:

1. Though Jesus had a lot of personal stuff on his plate, including the recent death of his cousin and ministry colleague John, and was heading for some down time away from the crowds, he nevertheless was able to put his own needs aside for a while to tend to the needs of others. Do we find this a challenge in our own life? How can we become more like Jesus in his selflessness?
2. Notice that, immediately after this event, Jesus does make sure he gets his alone time (see v 22-23). How can we strike the right balance between tending to the needs of others and tending to our own needs? What does the 2nd great commandment teach us about this – “Love your neighbour as you love yourself.”
3. How does this story portray the partnership between Jesus and us in tending to the needs of others? How do we experience this partnership in our caring for others?
4. Mark’s account of this story tells us that the disciples had been sent out on mission by Jesus (Mark 6 v 7-13) and it was while they were away working that John the Baptist was killed. When they came back they wanted to spend time reporting back to Jesus and eat, but the crowds were so many they couldn’t eat (Mark 6 v 30-31). So, why is Matthew 14 v 20 such an encouragement for them and us? What does this tell us about how Jesus will look after our needs as we look after the needs of others? Can you share any examples of this from your own life and experience?
5. What needs can you identify around you personally at this moment in time? Is God calling you to reach out with his compassion? What needs can we identify in our community and how might we tend to them as a church?

Pray:

- Thank God for his patient, faithful love and compassion towards us.
- Pray for God’s grace to get a healthy balance between tending to our own needs and those of others.

Sermon Notes:

Study 4: The 5 Marks of Mission - TRANSFORM

Isaiah 58 v 1-14

Context:

One of Rev Martin Luther King Jr's favourite biblical texts was Amos 5 v 24: *'Let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream!'*. In this famous verse the prophet Amos combined the two most common Hebrew words for justice. He prays that *'mishpat'* would roll on like a river and *'tzedek'* like a never-failing stream. *'Mishpat'*, usually translated as *'justice'* means to correct a wrong or to judge a wrongdoer, while *'tzedek'*, usually translated as *'righteousness'* means to act rightly or to do what is right. Both are important to God and His passion for justice and righteousness runs through the whole Bible. Amos was particularly concerned that the people of Israel were going through the motions of their worship and religion, for example going to the Temple every Sabbath to pray and offer sacrifices, whilst at the same time treating each other with injustice and inequality, particularly the poor. There was a gap between the profession of their lips and the practice of their lives, and God was not impressed. As we will see in today's study, the prophet Isaiah had to address the same problem.

Observation:

1. What does God command Isaiah to do in v 1?
2. What reason does God give for this command in v 2?
3. What is Israel's complaint in v 3a?
4. What reason does God give in v 3b-4 for not taking notice of their religious fasting?
5. How do v 5-7 contrast the kind of fasting Israel practices and the kind of fasting God wants to see?
6. What benefits does God promise them in v 8-12 if they accept his definition of fasting?
7. What further commands does God give in v 13 and with what promised benefits in v 14?

Meaning:

1. V 2-3 suggest that the people of Israel thought their spiritual and religious practices were acceptable to God. They seem sincere and genuine in seeking God and His ways, His justice and his nearness. Yet, they were so wide of the mark as far as God was concerned. How is it possible to be spiritual and religious, to practice prayer, worship, and Bible study, and yet to be blind to the grievous sin in our lives? To what extent is this a danger for us and how can we be alert to it?
2. Can you list the negative sins of injustice and unrighteousness God specifically accuses Israel of committing, either explicitly or implicitly in v 3b, v 4, v 9b, v 10a, v 13? To what extent do you see these same sins at work in the church and the world today?
3. Can you list the positive acts of justice and righteousness God specifically commands Israel to practice in v 6 and v 7? Can you think of some practical examples of how you individually or the church corporately could put these commands into practice today?
4. Can you list the benefits God promises to us if we live the just and righteous lives he commands in v 8, v 9, v 10b, v 11, v 12, v 14? What might these promises actually look like if God were to fulfil them in our life or the life of our church or even the life of our nation?

Application:

1. The 4th Mark of Mission, summed up in the word '**TRANSFORM**', is '*To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation.*' In what ways does today's Bible passage speak to this Mark of Mission?
2. What are some of the practical ways we can fulfil this Mark of Mission?
3. Read James 2 v 1-13, James 2 v 14-17, James 3 v 13 – 4 v 3, James 5 v 1-9. How do these excerpts from just one letter in the New Testament help us to apply the lessons from today's study?

Pray:

- For God's forgiveness when we have worshipped him with our lips but not our lives.
- For God's grace and power to 'act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God'

Sermon Notes:

Study 5: The 5 Marks of Mission: TREASURE

Isaiah 65 v 17-25

Context:

In this mini-series looking at the mission of the church we have seen that it can be summarised in 5 Marks of Mission. So far, we have explored the first 4 Marks, namely Tell (Evangelism), Train (Discipleship), Tend (Compassion), and Transform (Justice). In today's study we will look at the 5th and final Mark – **TREASURE**, which is about caring for creation. Last term our sermon and small group series focused extensively on this theme when we asked the question: Is God Green? It is good to be reminded in today's study that this environmental responsibility is part of the core of what it means to be a church engaged in God's mission in the world, rather than a fringe interest for quirky Christians. It was the prophet Isaiah who helped us to explore the issue of justice in our previous study, and he will now address this 5th mission imperative for the church.

Observation:

1. What does God say he will create in v 17 and what will be forgotten?
2. How should people react to what God is going to do according to v 18?
3. Who else will rejoice and be filled with delight according to v 19a?
4. What will no longer be heard according to v 19b?
5. What good news is declared in v 20?
6. What images of prosperity do we see in v 21-22?
7. What further good news is stated in v 23-24?
8. What will be the effect on creation according to v 25?

Meaning:

NOTE: The apostle John uses some of the imagery from this passage in the last two chapters of Revelation when he writes about a new heaven and a new earth which Jesus will create when he comes again. Here, Isaiah similarly looks forward to a renewal of creation, but sees it more as part of this present age rather than the age to come (for example according to v 20 death is still present in the world Isaiah imagines and part of human experience). Nevertheless, we have here an inspiring vision of what the world could be like if we treasure it as we should.

1. Why is v 17a such good news for our damaged environment and what kinds of things in our current broken creation do you think will not be remembered or come to mind (v 17b)?
2. What is the cause of all the joy in v 18-19a? What about this current creation, broken as it is, brings you joy and delight?
3. Why do you think the sound of weeping and crying will no longer be heard? What are some of the causes of sorrow in our current broken world and how do you think they will be transformed in the coming world?
4. Why is death, at any age or stage of life, such a scourge on human existence and how do you think God will accomplish his promise in v 20?
5. V 21-22 contrasts poverty with prosperity with images relevant to Isaiah's day. How would you define poverty and prosperity today? In what ways does the way we treat God's creation cause poverty for the many and prosperity for the few? Isaiah's vision in v 21-22 defined prosperity as living in your own house and eating from your own vineyard. If Isaiah

was speaking to us today, how might he rephrase v 21-22 to describe the transformation from poverty to prosperity in ways relevant to our day?

6. In what ways do too many people in our world today bear children for misfortune (v 23) and why will this be different in Isaiah's vision?
7. What is so amazing about the vision of v 25 (see similar images in Isaiah 11 v 6-9)? Why do you think Isaiah mentions that, despite the transformation for the animal kingdom, the serpent will still eat dust (v 25)?

Application:

1. Can remember some of the things you learned from the previous term's series on the environment and are there any small actions you put into practice as a result of that series that you are still doing today? Has it been challenging to keep it up? What helps you to persevere?
2. Is there any further action God is calling you to take as a result of today's study?
3. Can you identify any connections between this 5th Mark of Mission and the other 4? In other words, in what ways does caring for creation relate to evangelism, discipleship, compassion and justice?

Pray:

- Thank God for his creation and ask for forgiveness for damaging it.
- That God would show you any small actions you can take to better care for his creation.

Sermon Notes:

Study 6: 3 in 1 and 1 in 3 (The Trinity)

Ephesians 1 v 1-14

Context:

I remember as a young Christian being quite embarrassed about the Christian belief in the Trinity. This is the belief that there is only one God, not many gods, but this one God has always and will always exist in three persons, distinct from each other but united and inseparable. Because I couldn't really understand it, I couldn't therefore explain it or defend it, and hence I preferred to ignore it and hope no one ever asked me anything about it! I am glad to say I don't feel that way anymore. In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity is the teaching I love most and I now regard it as the most wonderful belief we hold as Christians. I still don't fully understand it nor can adequately explain it, but I don't worry so much about that anymore. After all, if we mere humans could fully understand and explain God, he probably wouldn't be worth believing in! So, let's dip our theological toe into the pool of the doctrine of the Trinity by exploring the opening words of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Observation:

1. Who is this letter from (v 1a)? Who is it to (v 1b)?
2. From whom do grace and peace come according to v 2?
3. Who is praised in v 3 and why?
4. The rest of the passage (v 4-14) lists some of the 'spiritual blessings' for which Paul praises God in v 3. So can you identify the blessings mentioned in the following verses:

v 4

v 5-6

v 7-8

v 9-10

v 11-12

v 13-14

5. Can you identify all the references to the three persons of the Trinity in this passage?

Meaning:

Paul takes an interesting approach to the doctrine of the Trinity in this passage. He doesn't try to explain the *being* of God as Trinity – how God in his *essence* can be both 1 and 3. Rather, he shows us the Trinity in *action* – how each person of the Trinity works in unity with the others in God's great plan of eternal salvation.

1. What roles or parts does God the Father play in the salvation plan according to this passage?
2. What roles or parts does God the Son, Jesus Christ, play?
3. What roles or parts does God the Holy Spirit play?
4. What is the ultimate goal or purpose of this salvation plan and the work of the Trinity according to v 6a, v 12b, and v 14b? In what ways does the work of the Trinity fulfil this ultimate goal?
5. According to this passage, God's plan of salvation stretches back before time began and reaches forward beyond time. Can you plot the whole story of salvation in its various steps in chronological order, as set out by Paul in this passage?
6. Why is it good news that God '*works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will*' (v 11)? How can this possibly be true when so much human activity seems to work against God's perfect will? Can you think of any stories in the Bible that illustrate the way God works out everything according to His purpose and plan, even when events or circumstances seem bad or even evil?
7. The Holy Spirit is described in v 13-14 as a 'seal' and a 'deposit' and a 'guarantee'. What do these three words tell us about the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians?

Application:

1. Many Christians have tried to explain the Trinity by using illustrations or analogies from real life. For example, a 3-leaved clover, the 3 states of water, the 3 parts of an egg, the 3 roles of a man. What are the strengths and the weaknesses of the different illustrations and analogies? What can we learn from Paul's approach in this passage, focusing on the action rather than the being of the Trinity? Do you think this is better approach for us to take in explaining the Trinity to others?
2. In what ways does the doctrine of the Trinity impact or influence your daily life as a Christian?

Pray:

- Thank God that he is Trinity.
- Thank each person of the Trinity for the role each plays in your salvation.
- Pray for a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Trinity.
- Pray for wisdom in explaining the Trinity to others.

Sermon Notes:

Study 7: Children & the Kingdom of God

Matthew 18 v 1-5 & 19 v 13-15

Context:

One of the great joys of our life at St James is the presence of children in our church family. Each one is such a blessing to us. Children were special and important to Jesus too and, as we will see in today's study, it is not so much that children are meant to learn from adults, but the other way around!

Observation:

1. Who ask the question in 18 v 1 and what is the question?
2. Who did Jesus use to illustrate his answer to this question (v 2)?
3. How does Jesus begin to answer their question in v 3?
4. How does he end his answer in v 4?
5. What surprising bonus comment doe Jesus make in v 5?
6. Who is brought to Jesus in 19 v 13 and why?
7. What was the reaction of the disciples?
8. How does Jesus respond to the disciples in v 14?
9. What did Jesus do in conclusion in v 15?

Meaning:

1. What do you think the disciples' question in 18 v 1 means and what might have motivated it? - see also Matthew 20 v 20-28.
2. Why would Jesus' action in 18 v 2 have been so shocking?
3. What do you think Jesus means in 18 v 3-4? In what ways do we need to change and become like children and why is this necessary in order to enter the kingdom of heaven?
4. What does Jesus mean in 18 v 5 and what implications should this have for the way we value children?
5. Why do you think people wanted Jesus to pray for their children (19 v 13)?
6. Why do you think the disciples rebuked them?
7. In what ways might people be guilty of hindering children from coming to Jesus (19 v 14)?
8. Jesus blessed the children (19 v 15) – how might we bless the children around us?

Application:

1. Why do people want to be great? What are the dangers of such a desire for greatness? Is it wrong for Christians to be ambitious?
2. Are there traits in you that are hindering your growth and progress as a Christian? In what ways might God be calling you to change and become like a child?
3. In what ways do we learn from our children at St James? How can we be better at this?
4. How might Jesus' words in 18 v 5 shape the way we treat children in our church? In what ways are we demonstrating our value of children at St James and what could be better?
5. Are there ways in which we at St James hinder children from coming to Jesus and are there ways we can be better in letting them come to Him? Do we put enough emphasis and resources into our children's ministry?

Pray:

- Thank God for our children at St James.
- Pray that He will change us by His grace to become more like them.
- Pray that St James will let children come to Jesus and never hinder them.

Sermon Notes:

Study 8: Windrush Sunday

Jeremiah 29 v 1-7

Context:

21st June 1948 is a landmark date in British history, for it was on that day that the HMT Empire Windrush docked at Tilbury in East London. 492 passengers from the Caribbean alighted, many of them having served in the Second World War. Each of them were British citizens who had come to the UK, at great cost to themselves, to help Britain rebuild itself in the wreckage of the war and to make a new life for themselves and eventually their families who would join them later. They and those who followed were incredibly resilient and creative in the face of the many challenges they encountered, including persistent racism, and the UK has been blessed abundantly by the pioneering presence of the Windrush generation and their descendants. The Friends of the Heart Foundation of Jamaica, with its close connection to St James, is just one example of the commitment of those of Caribbean heritage to build a more just and compassionate community, both here in the UK and back in the Caribbean. Our study today is based on the sermon given at St James on 26th June when we celebrated Windrush Day and our annual thanksgiving for the Friends of the Heart Foundation of Jamaica (FHFJ).

Observation:

1. Who writes this letter according to v 1? From where and to whom is it written?
2. Who had gone into exile from Jerusalem (v 2)?
3. Who delivered the letter (v 3)?
4. According to v 4 who was the real author of the letter?
5. What instructions are given in v 5?
6. What instructions are given in v 6?
7. What instructions are given in v 7 and why?

Meaning:

NOTE: The Israelites were living in exile in Babylon against their will. God sent them there as punishment for their persistent sin and rebellion over hundreds of years. This is therefore *very* different to the Windrush generation and their descendants who are *not* in the UK as punishment for sin, but for far more positive reasons. However, there are some parallels between the two situations and lessons we can learn.

1. Why do you think Jeremiah would want to write a letter like this? What might have motivated him to write?
2. For many Israelite exiles life in their new country was harsh and they longed to go back home. Read Psalm 137 v 1-6. What factors would have made life so harsh for the exiles? What challenges and difficulties have the Windrush generation and their descendants (and those from other UK Minority Ethnic communities) faced in the UK and what has helped them to overcome?
3. With what attitude do you think the Jewish exiles would have received Jeremiah's letter?
4. How would you summarise the gist of the letter and the instructions from God?
5. Why were the instructions in v 5-6 so important?

6. How has the Windrush generation and their descendants (and those from other UKME communities) fulfilled these same instructions in the UK? Can you give any specific examples?
7. Why might the Israelite exiles have been reluctant to seek the peace and prosperity of Babylon (v 7)? What, in practical terms, might they have done to seek the peace and prosperity of their new home?
8. In what ways has the Windrush generation (and those from the many other UKME communities in the UK) sought and helped to realise the peace and prosperity of the UK?
9. Jeremiah writes that if Babylon prospers then the exiles will also prosper (v 7). To what extent has the Windrush generation and their descendants (and those from other UKME communities) shared in the prosperity of the UK? What have been or are some of the barriers to sharing in this prosperity and how have or could they be overcome?

Application:

1. If you are from the Windrush generation, or are one of their descendants, or are from another UKME community, can you share what have been or are the joys *and* sorrows of your experience of living in the UK and what has helped you to overcome?
2. What ONE thing would you want someone from the majority population of the UK to know about your experience as someone from a UKME community, and what ONE reform would you want to see to improve racial equality and justice in our society?

Pray:

- Give thanks for the contribution made to life in the UK by UKME communities.
- Pray for better relations between the various communities that make up our nation.
- Pray for forgiveness for racism and exclusion.

Sermon Notes:

Study 9: Yahweh Rapha – The Healing of Naaman

2 Kings 5 v 1 – 19a

Context:

Today we begin another mini-series for the month of July exploring healing in the Bible. Back in study 3 we saw that the 3rd Mark of Mission for the church is TEND – to respond to human need by loving service. Healing is one of the ways we can do this, showing God’s compassion for those whose bodies or minds are affected by the brokenness that entered God’s perfect creation when Adam and Eve fell from grace in Genesis 3. When we think of healing in the Bible our minds perhaps turn instantly to the New Testament - to the ministry of Jesus and the apostles. However, the title ‘Yahweh Rapha’, the LORD the healer, is given to Himself by God in the Old Testament. Healing is a trait or characteristic of God’s *eternal* nature – He is, always was, and always will be a healer – whenever He is confronted by the brokenness of the human condition His instinct and desire is to heal. So, we turn to the Old Testament for our first study in this mini-series, to the famous true story of Naaman.

Observation:

1. How is Naaman described in v 1? What is positive and what is negative in his life?
2. Who had Aramean raiding bands brought back to Aram and what was her job (v 2)?
3. What advice did she give to her mistress in v 3?
4. What did the King of Aram say when Naaman asked for permission to go to Israel (v 4-5a)?
5. What did Naaman take with him (v 5b)?
6. What did the King of Aram’s letter say (v 6)?
7. How did the King of Israel receive the letter (v 7)?
8. What was Elisha’s response when he heard of the King of Israel’s reaction (v 8)?
9. What message did Elisha send out to Naaman when he arrived at his door (v 9-10)?
10. How did Naaman react to this message (v 11-12)?
11. What counsel did Naaman’s servants give him in v 13?
12. What did Naaman then do and what was the result (v 14)?
13. What spiritual impact did this have on Naaman in v 15?
14. What was Elisha’s response to Naaman’s offer of payment in v 16?
15. What requests does Naaman then make of Elisha in v 17-18?
16. What is Elisha’s final response in v 19a?

Meaning:

NOTE: At this particular point in history, the northern kingdom of Israel, with its capital in Samaria under the rule of King Joram, was at war with its northern neighbour, Aram, with its capital in Damascus under the rule of King Ben-Hadad.

1. Knowing what you do about leprosy in biblical times, what physical, emotional, social and spiritual impact would this health condition have had on Naaman? How would his condition have contrasted with his status and achievements (v 1)?

2. What surprises you about the young Jewish girl's words in v 2-3? Do you think you would have cared for your captor as she did if you were in her shoes?
3. Despite the King of Israel's suspicious attitude towards the motives of the King of Aram in sending Naaman to him to be healed, what truth does he speak about God and the power to heal in the middle of v 7?
4. Why do you think Elisha sent a messenger out to Naaman rather than going out to speak to him himself when he arrived with his entourage and great wealth at Elisha's door (v 10)?
5. Why do you think Naaman reacted so angrily to the message and what do you think was the reason God chose this way of doing things (v 11-12)?
6. Naaman eventually agrees to the plan and is healed (v 14). How can we explain this seemingly miraculous event?
7. Why do you think Elisha refused Naaman's gift (v 16)? What does this tell us about the nature of healing (or any other of God's blessings)?
8. Why do you think this healing had such converting spiritual impact on Naaman (v 15, v 17)?
9. Is Naaman's request in v 18 an inappropriate spiritual compromise or an acceptable bit of realism?

Application:

1. Like the young Jewish captive girl in v 2-3, we may sometimes find ourselves living and working in circumstances we wouldn't choose, where it may be difficult to live out our faith openly and safely. What can we learn from her example to encourage and inspire us?
2. How does this passage make it abundantly clear that the power to heal belongs to God alone and not to any human being? Have you come across examples of men or women claiming that *they* have the power to heal and even asking for money to perform such healings? How should we respond to such claims? How can we ensure as a church that the healing ministry we offer and practice doesn't fall into this dangerous trap?
3. Why did God want to humble Naaman by the method He chose to heal him? What does this teach us about our attitude and approach to God when we seek His blessings?
4. Sometimes physical healing can lead to spiritual conversion, as it did with Naaman. Can you think of any other examples of this in the Bible? Do you know of any examples in your own experience?
5. Elisha agreed to the compromise request of Naaman in v 18. In what ways might we face potential compromises? How do we decide where to draw the line – i.e. what is an acceptable compromise? Can you think of any other examples of this in the Bible?

Pray:

- For humility in our relationship with God.
- Thank Him for His power to heal.
- Pray for those known to you who are ill at this time.
- Pray for God's grace and wisdom to avoid any ungodly compromises.

Sermon Notes:

Study 10: Yahweh Rapha – The Healing of a Blind Man

John 9 v 1-11

Context:

For today's study we move from the Old to the New Testament, to one of the most amazing healing miracles performed by Jesus and one of the most controversial, as he healed the blind man on a Sabbath day, to the disapproval of the religious leaders.

Observation:

1. How is the man at the centre of this healing miracle described in v 1?
2. What question did the disciples ask in v 2?
3. How does Jesus reply in v 3?
4. What further words does Jesus speak in v 4?
5. What amazing claim does Jesus make in v 5?
6. What did Jesus do in v 6?
7. What does Jesus tell the man to do in v 7?
8. What question did his neighbours ask in v 8?
9. What mixed responses are given to their question in v 9?
10. What further question is then asked in v 10?
11. How did the man reply in v 11?

Meaning:

1. Why do you think v 1 makes the point that this man was blind from birth? – see also v 32.
2. Why do you think the disciples asked the question in v 2? What was the theology behind their question? Do you think this kind of theology still exists today?
3. What does Jesus' reply in v 3 teach us about God and about the ultimate purpose of sickness and healing?
4. Given that this was a Sabbath day, why would Jesus' words in v 4 be controversial? – see also v 16.
5. What is the significance of the words: 'I AM the Light of the World' in v 5 and how do the words relate to the miracle Jesus is about to perform and its impact?
6. Jesus could have healed the blind man with a simple word of command. So, why do you think he does what he does in v 6-7?
7. Why do you think there were such mixed reactions in the crowd (v 8-9)? Are there mixed reactions to claims of healing today?
8. How does the blind man's understanding of Jesus' identity develop over the course of this incident? – see v 11, v 17b, v 30-33, v 35-38.

Application:

1. Do you need to adjust your theology of sickness and suffering as a result of studying this passage? If so, how?
2. What does it mean for you in your daily life that Jesus is the Light of the World?

3. Why does physical healing sometimes lead to spiritual conversion, as it did for the blind man? On the other hand, why do some people reject belief in Jesus, even when they can't deny that a miracle has happened, like the religious leaders?

Pray:

- For God to give us a right theology, both of sickness and healing.
- For those we know who are suffering, and those who don't know Jesus.

Sermon Notes:

Study 11: Yahweh Rapha – The Healing of Hezekiah

2 Kings 20 v 1-11

Context:

In study 9, we began our exploration of healing in the Bible by turning to the Old Testament book of 2 Kings, to the healing of Naaman. We turn again to that same Old Testament book for today's study as we look at the extraordinary healing of King Hezekiah. Hezekiah was one of the very few godly kings to rule the southern kingdom of Judah. He was faithful to God and led his people to great victories over their enemy, the Assyrians. However, we join his story at a very low point in his life. In fact, he is at death's door, but all is not lost, as we are about to discover.

Observation:

1. What was Hezekiah's condition in v 1a?
2. Who goes to visit him and what does he say (v 1b)?
3. What does Hezekiah do in response to the message (v 2)?
4. What is the gist of his prayer and how was he feeling (v 3)?
5. What happened as Isaiah was leaving the king's palace (v 4)?
6. What does God say he has done and what does he say he will do in v 5-6?
7. What happens in v 7?
8. What does v 8 tell us about Hezekiah's reaction to God's word that came in v 5-6, before he was healed in v 7?
9. What sign did God give to show that he would keep his promise to heal Hezekiah (v 9-11)?

Meaning:

1. How would you have responded to Isaiah's message in v 1?
2. Why do sickness and death cause such emotional and spiritual anguish for us, as they clearly did for Hezekiah as he wept bitterly? What can we learn from his response in v 2?
3. Read Numbers 23 v 19. In light of this text, how do we explain what appears to be a change of mind by God in v 5-6?
4. What do learn about God in v 5 that can encourage us when we are feeling as Hezekiah did? Can you share any times you have felt like Hezekiah did in v 2-3 and have experienced the God who hears our prayer, sees our tears and heals us?
5. What do God's words in v 6 tell us about God's sovereign control over life and death? Do you find this truth about God encouraging or discouraging?
6. V 7 makes it clear that a natural, medical remedy was used in Hezekiah's healing. What does this tell us about the relationship between supernatural healing and natural or medical healing? Does God work through both?
7. Why do you think Hezekiah asked God for a sign in v 8?
8. What was the essence of the sign and why would this have convinced Hezekiah that God could and would keep His promise to heal him?

Application:

1. What do we learn from this passage about the character and nature of God?
2. How does that knowledge about God influence or impact your daily life?

3. Is it ever okay to ask God for a sign? Can you think of any other examples of asking for a sign in the Bible and how such requests were received by God? How do we know when it is okay to ask for a sign and when it isn't?
4. How do we get a right balance between supernatural and natural or medical healing today? How can we as a church show that we value both?

Pray:

- For those known to us who are sick or dying.
- Thank God for his sovereign control over all things, including sickness and the sun!

Sermon Notes:

Study 12: Yahweh Rapha – A Dead Girl & a Sick Woman

Luke 8 v 40-56

Context:

Our final study in this mini-series tells the story of two healings, both performed by Jesus within a very short time span. Both are stunning in their miraculous nature and both teach us important truths about Jesus.

Observation:

1. Who came to Jesus in v 41? What did he do and why in v 41-42a?
2. What did Jesus do in response (v 42b)?
3. What did the crowds do in v 40 and then in v 42b?
4. Who does Luke specifically mention was in the crowd in v 43 and what was her condition?
5. What did she do in v 44?
6. What question does Jesus ask in v 45a and what reply does he receive in v 45b?
7. How did Jesus know someone had intentionally touched him (v 46)?
8. What did the woman then do and how did Jesus respond to her (v 47-48)?
9. Who then came to Jesus and what did they say (v 49)?
10. What was Jesus' reply in v 50?
11. Who did Jesus allow to go with him into the house (v 51)?
12. What did Jesus tell the mourners in v 52 and what was their reaction in v 53?
13. What did Jesus do in v 54 and what was the result in v 55a?
14. What two things did Jesus tell the parents to do in v 55b-56?

Meaning:

1. How do you think Jairus would have been feeling and what would he have been thinking as he came to Jesus in v 41-42? Have you ever felt like that?
2. How do you think the woman in the crowd would have been feeling and what would she have been thinking as she hid herself amongst the throng in v 43? – see Leviticus 15 v 19-23. Why does this make her actions in v 44 so amazing?
3. Jesus would have worn a prayer shawl (a talith) which had a tassel on each corner. The corners of a prayer shawl were also known as 'wings'. In the last book of the Old Testament Malachi prophesies in 4 v 2 about the future coming of the promised Messiah with these words: 'the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings.' In light of this information, what was the significance of the woman's actions and the outcome in v 44?
4. Jesus was clearly being touched by lots of people (see v 42b and 45b). So, what was different about the woman's touch and what might we learn from her example?
5. Why do you think Jesus insisted on identifying the woman? What do you think she expected Jesus and why (v47a)?
6. Bearing in mind the cultural and religious rules that applied to the woman's condition, what do Jesus words and actions towards her tell us about Him?
7. How do you think Jairus would have been feeling towards Jesus when he sent the message in v 49 and what might he have thought to Jesus' response in v 50?
8. Why do you think Jesus restricted who he took with him into the house in v 51?

9. What would have been thinking if you were one of the mourners in v 52?
10. Read Numbers 19 v 11-15. Jesus could have raised the dead girl with a word of command (she he did with Lazarus). So, why would Jesus' actions in v 54 have been so controversial and, like with the touch from the bleeding woman, what does this teach us about the nature and character of Jesus?
11. Why do you think Jesus commanded the parents to keep quiet about what had happened?

Application:

1. What kinds of people are regarded as 'unclean' in our world today? How does Jesus feel about them?
2. Do you ever feel unworthy to come to Jesus and ask for his help, like the woman did? What do you learn from this passage to help you overcome such feelings?
3. What can we learn from the woman's actions about the way we approach Jesus when we are in need?
4. Jesus called the woman out of the crowd. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus doesn't want you to be anonymous with him?
5. Why do you think Jesus deliberately flouted the Law on uncleanness, both with the bleeding woman and the dead girl?
6. Why is it such good news that Jesus has power over life and death?

Pray:

- For anyone known to you who feels unclean or unworthy.
- For faith to 'reach out and touch Jesus' in our need.
- Thank God that He has power over life and death.

Sermon Notes:

