

2026 TALK, 19.7.26, MARK 1: 9-15, MATT 28:16-20

OUR MISSION: SHARING GOOD NEWS

We all know that the task of sharing the good news is urgent... Don't we? This is very clear from both our Bible passages today. In Mark chapter one, we probably have the first words of the New Testament. The first time any of the gospel writers put pen to paper, he doesn't hang around & get diverted by many details. Everything seems to happen all at once. No sooner is Jesus baptised than he is being tempted in the wilderness. Then blink - and John the Baptist has been thrown in prison & Jesus immediately throws himself into his mission of both speaking & demonstrating good news. Jesus wastes no time in telling people that the Kingdom of God is here & that they need to turn to God.

Similarly, at the end of Matthew's gospel, possibly the last words written in the three earlier gospels, the description of the context of Jesus' last words is pared back to the simplest details. And Jesus last words to his 11 disciples are very brief. No sermon here, just three verses. Again, this hammers home both the essential nature of the church's task. And also, how urgent & all-embracing this challenge is.

So, we know that people today desperately need to hear good news. You don't need me to tell you this. This sense of people clinging to some semblance of hope has been reinforced by the reaction this week to England's defeat in the World Cup... (Let's not go there now! No doubt there will plenty of analysis over the coming days. Lots of weeping & gnashing of teeth, before the next World Cup!).

At the same time, there's something else we all know. We are all daunted by the enormity of the challenge of sharing the good news... Aren't we?... Hard enough to contemplate the thousands of people living without God on our doorstep, let alone the billions of people across our world today. Sheep without a shepherd. People in desperate need of a true Saviour.

So, where better to turn to, than India, for some inspiration. India, one of the most populous & needy places on earth. A place where I recently heard leading Indian missionary, Ben Francis, talk about a city of 18 million people, as a 'small place'... Of course, India is exactly where the man whose name is on the front of our church, chose to help launch the modern missionary movement.

I was very struck by much of what Ben Francis said, at a BMS event I attended recently. One of the things he said was that Baptists in India have re-named Jesus' Great Commission in Matt 28. They now choose to call it the 'Everyday Commission'. And here's why. 'The Great Commission' makes it sound unreachable. A challenge perhaps for the few – those trained to be evangelists & missionaries. Not so. William Carey was a church minister with a job on the side as a cobbler, before he was called by God to go to India. He received no training to be a missionary. He trained himself in understanding Indian culture.

Thank Peter & Louise