

Matthew 9:35 to 10: 8

I don't know about you but I am constantly hearing the mis-pronunciation of words and the introduction of new words into the worldwide vocabulary.

Many words can and do change from their original meaning and can, in time, take on additional meaning.

For example let us take the word "thing."

A 'Thing' could be a stone
or a tea towel
or maybe a living creature, such as a horse
or at times even a person
how many times have you said "pass me the thingy please".

Then there **came** a change. "Thing" also became the word for an emotion, an opinion, a way of life, a belief, and most commonly for a characteristic activity such as in "Doing your own thing" or "Get out of here and go do your thing some where else."

So let us now think about the Jesus.
What was his "thing"?

To Jesus, it was to actively live the life of loving God and those around him, with characteristic love and good humour.

The Gospel of Matthew has a fine summary of this at the end of chapter 9 where he wrote:-

Jesus went around all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and curing every infirmity.

When he looked at the crowds, he had compassion for them. They were harassed and dejected like sheep without a shepherd.

Notice that in our reading Matthew mentioned the word - compassion. We would all know that Compassion is an essential element of the Jesus thing.

We need to understand that - pity and compassion, like humility, were classed as serious faults in one's character in the Greek-Roman world.

The intellectual Greek spurned it as a crude regression into unenlightened human weakness

and the Romans derided it as a flaw that would ruin a man's precious virtue.

But Jesus practised compassion.

He had compassion on the crowds that gathered around him, desperate for help and guidance.

Try to look at the crowds through the eyes of Jesus, and picture the common, down trodden people of the land, - huddled together like a flock under attack. Nowhere to turn, no one to protect them in their extreme vulnerability.

It was a part of his 'thing' for Jesus to have compassion on them. His heart went out to them.

He travelled around the Galilean region, meeting the common people in open spaces or in towns and synagogues, teaching them the love of God, preaching the presence of God's kingdom in their midst and healing their diseases and curing their handicaps.

This was the true Jesus 'thing'.

But genuine compassion comes at a cost.

Often, after dealing with the crowds, Jesus felt drained and utterly exhausted.

And finally his compassion for the common people cost him his life.

There is no true Christianity which does not share this Jesus thing.

Immediately after Matthew summarises the Jesus thing, he moves on to the sending out of the 12 disciples on their first mission.

They are to, 'go do the Jesus thing' and to practice the deeds of love displayed by their Master.

Here, for the first time, the disciples are called apostles.

Apostle, in New Testament Greek meant an emissary, a person sent out on a mission with the authority of the sender behind them.

But the disciples cannot stay at the point of being learners in the school of Christ.

The time comes when the disciples must become the practitioners.

They need to become the ambassadors of Christ Jesus.

This first sending out was evidently not to be a protracted one.

It was a quick whip around the countryside in order to awaken people to the good news.

The “marching orders” were not for each apostle to “do their own thing” but to do the Jesus thing.

Not their version of God but to spread the version Jesus taught and embodied.

The spreading of this Jesus thing was not always easy; not like throwing a handful of gold coins into a crowd.

The going would get tough.

Some homes and some towns would reject them.

The message of Jesus ‘**never was and never will be**’ universally popular in this world of arrogance, greed and delusion.

Some might misunderstand the Jesus thing, others will understand it well enough to know that it threatens their evil ways.

Jesus told his apostles; Do your best, - go to everyone in peace. But if they will not receive you, shake the dust **of** that place off your feet and try elsewhere.

The apostles would be, sooner or later, not only scorned and rejected but also hounded and persecuted, just as their Lord had been.

There was, and is, an inevitable vulnerability in those who try to live with and for Jesus.

They would need all their native cunning to read the situations, and all their sincerity to be effective emissaries of the Jesus thing...

Recall what Matthew says *“**Look, I sent you out like sheep in the midst of wolves. So be as wise as serpents and as sincere as doves.**”*

Matthew does not tell us how fruitful the twelve apostles were on their first mission and we don’t know how well people received the Jesus thing when it was presented.

Success is most difficult to define.

Reception of the gospel can be hampered by the closed minds of the recipients.

For those first apostles some people would respond to the Jesus thing, others would reject it .

We today are the sent out ones, the emissaries or apostles.

It is not sufficient to be disciples, to be the learners.

What we learn must be embodied in how we live each day.

All our lives we will be influenced by our discipleship, learners in the school of Christ. That will make us humble as we take up the more difficult commission of being an apostle:

Let us pray

**Most loving God, because your love is for all classes and races,
you call not only the very gifted people but common folk like us
to be Christ's disciples and to share the good news.**

**Please govern our unruly feelings and dissident thoughts,
that with a single devotion to you we may be your heralds
in a world longing for much better news
than that which fascinates and saturates the media.**

This we pray through Christ Jesus, the Joy of the universe!

Amen!