

Caroline Fletcher

reflects on

Matthew 9:35 – 10:8 [9-23]

Despite opposition from the Pharisees, Christ heads out, driven by heartfelt compassion, to take the good news to the cities and villages. The actual word translated as "compassion" in our reading is the strongest word the Greek language has for this feeling, denoting deep emotion. Unlike the Pharisees, whose attitude was one of judgement towards those they considered sinners, Christ was moved by love for people who were distant from God. And, rather than condemning ordinary folk for their lack of godliness, he held the religious

leaders responsible for how they had drifted from God. He recognised the crowds as "sheep without a shepherd" – an unprotected, unguided and abandoned flock, as helpless and vulnerable as sheep before wolves.

Jesus' mission was to reach out to these lost people and bring them back to God. He believed vast numbers would be open to his message, proclaiming the harvest to be plentiful. But he needed help, and so he prayed for more people to join him in his work, before commissioning and sending out his twelve disciples. Indeed, Matthew emphasises that by doing this the disciples were actually continuing Christ's work.

When we feel daunted by the task of continuing Christ's mission, let us be encouraged by Jesus' optimistic belief in the transforming power of the Gospel and God's ability to work through and protect us, as we reach out with the good news. ☺



Lord God, thank you for your faith in us and the transforming power of the Gospel. Grant us strength, compassion and resourcefulness as we reach out to others with the good news. Amen.

Summer reading

The Go-Between God, by John V. Taylor

Recommended by Barbara Mosse

In the coming weeks writers will be sharing their recommendations for Christian books for summer reading.

The Go-Between God offers the reader the fruits of John Taylor's thinking, praying and reflecting on his work in Christian mission. For him, the Holy Spirit is the "go-between God" – the burning heart of all missionary activity. And the Spirit's range extends far wider than any narrowly defined missionary activity – the Spirit is the enabler and enliverer

of all life. Various questions predominate: Who is the Holy Spirit? How does the Spirit operate in our world? How does the Spirit communicate with us, and how can we respond?

Today, fifty-four years after it was first published in 1972, the issues raised in *The Go-Between God* have as much, if not more, urgent relevance for the contemporary Church, posing thought-provoking questions as it faces the challenge of mission. ☺

Walking with Rosie

Belonging

by Gillian Cooper

On the recreation ground this morning we bump into John. The dogs exchange enthusiastic greetings while we chat. John has lived here all of his eighty-plus years, born into a farming family, tenants of the local estate. It emerges in conversation that he and his father once owned my house as accommodation for their workers. He is off later to do a talk on the history of farming in the village.

I envy John his rootedness in this place, his deep sense of belonging and his knowledge of everyone and everything. I have lived here only a short time, and despite the warm welcome will always be something of an alien. But I realise that I have my own lasting place of belonging. On Sundays the Church of England enfolds me as it has always done. And, more importantly, I belong to God's kingdom, as I have from before my birth and will do for all eternity. ☺

“ Love deems this world worth rescuing.”

Philip Yancey (born 1949), author