**Stowe Parish Church: October 29th 2021**

**Mission**

This morning we are looking at mission

Whenever we talk about mission it is sometimes difficult to see where we fit. Can I really make a difference? Can I share my faith with others ? Can I live out my life in a way that points others towards an encounter with Jesus. Mission is about God working His purposes out in His world and the church discerning where He is calling us to be part of that mission and where I fit in.

Before we drill down to us here in Stowe church today let’s just remind ourselves about the source of mission

Joe Paprocki in his book . Seven keys to Spiritual Wellness writes

“The God we seek is on fire, He has a mission and invites you and me to be part of it “

So what is God fired up about? Joe Paprocki thinks it is “selfless love expressed in mercy, compassion and justice”. These he sees are key elements of being involved in God’s mission.

So it is important to remember that God is a missionary God. Mission is rooted in the heart of God, that heart of love that led to His only son Jesus being sent to bring about forgiveness, healing and restoration.

And we are called to join God in His mission of love, mercy, compassion and justice. But how do we give ourselves in selfless love demonstrating God’s mercy, compassion and justice to the community God has called us to live in and serve.

We might feel we are too old, or not good enough or have too little faith to be of any use to God but that is not the way God sees us. We are here today because somewhere along life’s way God called us to be part of his family and we have responded. So God has called us and part of that calling is being involved in His mission. We are reminded in Psalm 139 that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, we are unique, and there is only one of us. Therefore every day where we go, what we do, who we see is unique. We are a unique presence. So you are already involved in God’s mission because where you go, what you do and who you see is unique to you and therefore unique to God.

Can we for a moment think about the cross. Jesus taking upon himself our sins, that through faith in Jesus we can be forgiven restored and set free. But Jesus was also defeating the powers of evil that have tarnished God’s creation, bringing in injustice, hatred and divisions

It is the cross and the resurrection that are at the heart of mission and is to the cross we must look to begin to grasp what mission might mean for us day to day .

Can I diverge for a moment to say that in preparing for today I have been wrestling with an issue that I feel I must share with you. A question been niggling me .Why do I watch Coronation Street. ?

Like all soaps it tackles issues of the day, yes exaggerated for dramatic effects but the issues they tackle that are in our communities , they are around us . Recent ones being acid attacks, grooming of children, facing MND, lying and broken relationships, homelessness . All life is there and it reminds us we live in a broken world. It is a stark reminder that brokenness is all around us and people are crying out for answers, for hope, for support, for a kind word and the good news of the gospel , the cross.

But let’s look at what we have to offer before thinking what that might mean in day to day situations. Three words to help us ponder on what we bring to those unique situations . Love, Hope and Justice

**Love**

At the heart of the gospel is love.

Jesus summarised the commandments as love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.And neighbor means those we meet as well as live by.

To be more Christ like we are commanded to love our neighbor even if some are easier to love than others.

And Jesus always spoke with love

When Jesus was approached by a rich young man asking about eternal life we are told Jesus looked straight him with love.

He healed out of a compassion and love for those hurting, suffering from this world’s brokenness .

He wept at the death of his friend Lazarus because He loved him.

He lovingly restored Peter after Peter had denied Him

He looked at the state of Jerusalem with love and wept at what he saw.

And Jesus commanded his disciples to love one anther

The early church was marked out by love as it drew in those who saw that love

So love is crucial as we engage with others. Why should we love in this sacrificially way

John is one of his letters said quite simply

" We love because He first loved us “

**Hope**

Let us turn to hope

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for hope can also be translated to wait. And this was at the heart of the passage we read from Isaiah. The Jews were to wait for the coming Messiah who will come from the root of Jesse. And His coming will herald in a new kingdom where division and enmity will be no more. We know this Messiah is Jesus

and He declared the Kingdom of God had entered our world to be fully realised when He came again . Whilst we wait we are to be showing the hope of being part of God’s kingdom now

Peter says in his first letter

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Faith in Jesus has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus.

The hope we have is a certain hope, it is not the hope we often use today when something might happen, we hope it will but with no conviction. No the hope we have is a certain hope because Jesus rose and that gives us that certain hope of life after death, that this life is not the end

This certain hope should shape our lives, give our lives a new perspective and most importantly equip us to be a help and encouragement to others

In John 1 we are told that God is the light in the dark world in which we live and that light brings healing hope and direction to those that are hurting

And we walk in a world that is hurting and we can be unique carriers of that light .

**Justice**

if we are to set people free to find God, or start on the journey to find God, then we must be aware of the many obstacles that get in the way, the devil loves to bind and blind people. We must not be afraid to tackle injustice when and where we see it but When the Bible talks about injustice it shines a light into those places where what is happening is far from God’s desire for His world and He weeps over those caught up in those situations. It also challenges our attitudes. Do we have deep concern, do we weep for example, for the poor, the outcast who cannot find their way to God because of the situation they find themselves in.

In the passage from Luke Jesus sets out his mission

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
    because he has anointed me  
    to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
    and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
19    to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+4+%3A+18-19+&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25083a)]

Jesus is bringing healing, freedom, justice and hope

to our broken world. This was his mission and the mission

he calls us into.

Do we like Jesus feel, angry when we see injustice? Where people are treated in a way that is a long way from how God wants them to be treated.

Can we bring comfort to someone we meet caught up a situation we know is not what God want for them. Can we pray for someone who is struggling?

Or pray for one area that breaks our heart when we see it happening?

We worship a God who steps into our brokenness and fragility standing alongside those who are broken hearted – this is part of our calling

So love, hope and justice, three words rooted in the cross but which will shape who we are as Christians.

And we can allow the love, hope and justice flow through us to touch the lives of to those we encounter day by day.

What might encounter look like?

Man on the bus story

I have a friend who will pray with anyone anywhere at the drop of a hat. I remember he prayed for a lady on the till in Tesco’s who was having a bad day.

Now those approaches might not be for you

A word that is around a lot today on social media is influencer.

That word influencer is one that can be a way of seeing how we can be part of God’s mission day by day

We can all be influencers for the gospel. We can let the hope , love and the desire for justice we have in our hearts, shape how we engage with others.

We can all be those unique carriers of love and hope to those whose lives we touch. It might be a spoken word, it might be an action

And you can never tell what response God will awake in the lives of those we encounter

But Peter then reminds us what to do

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,”

So we all have unique opportunities to be influencers for the gospel and share the gospel when that opportunity arises

In our own small way part of God’s mission to a broken world.