



# THE NEW SHOFAR

## Being Doers of the Word

The mission of the Church is "out there"

### Lent 2

*Go forth out of thy country*

When God tells Abram to move out of his own land and go to Canaan, what he was in fact doing was commanding him to move out of his comfort zone. He could only carry out the works of God if he could rely on the Almighty alone. Crazy on so many levels but it is fundamental to the way God carries out His saving works in creation. Things go awry when those who are supposed to be servants of God, strive to carry out the will of God by human energy and human strengths alone. Without a deep intimacy with God, things will always hover around the edge of disaster.

But the story goes on. God says *if you do this* – become vulnerable – *I will bless you* and *I will make of you* great. In other words, where your ability to cope, to survive; to grow and to become successful reaches its limits, I will be there as your God to enable your success. This is all about God. The more God in what we plan and what we do, the more grace there is at work and the more we are likely to achieve that for which we have been called. God wants our ministry to succeed and as long as we work and live within the embrace of God, the world will find a blessing.

*according to his own purpose...*

Here is the motto for our lives as Christians – life is to be lived according to the purposes and plans set down by God. These are revealed to us by the prophets and made concrete and alive in the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, our Messiah and Saviour. This is how Timothy saw it. We are called by God, not on the basis of what we can bring into our collaboration with the divine activity on earth. We are at work in the world on the basis of the grace and power of Jesus the Christ. Church living is all about serving God and not personal preferences.

Grace is the inner power we need to take up and use. It will do nothing on its own. Grace is a gift of empowerment, of love, of mercy, of forgiveness but it only works when we collaborate with the God who graces us in Christ. This grace is a vocation, a calling, an invitation to live as a co-worker with Christ in the transformation and renewal of the world. It is not magic. It can sit within us as an un-used power, a life -giving possibility but is only released when we use it. That is why Abram had to act on God's command to *go forth*. It was in his leaving the power of grace was released within his life. Staying where he was meant the grace of God was untouched. Heading off on the road he was touched by grace, strengthened by the Almighty and guaranteed success because he lived in Canaan under the blessing of God.

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## *Let us make three tents and stay here*

Peter's response to the Transfiguration is right on the spot. He wishes to remain there on the top of the mountain with the transfigured Jesus and alongside Elijah and Moses. While he is up there, the world is falling apart, with the rich and powerful abusing the poor ones of God, neighbour not reaching out to neighbour and the stranger being ignored and left on the side of the road. This is not the land of promise to which Abram had been sent. Nor was it the land of *milk and honey* promised by God. What had gone wrong is simple to diagnose. Sin. Arrogance. Selfishness. Hubris. The lie that we believe: go to synagogue, make our offerings and all is well with God. It is not. For ***what God wants is love not sacrifice.***

The significance of the Transfiguration is that we are presented with an insight into the reality of Him who is the **Light of the world**. But the world cannot and does not see that Light very often. One reason for the growing darkness of the world in which we live is that we are too much like Peter. We want to hold that Light on the top of the mountain whereas the Father sent the Son to be the light of the world. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount tells us to be *lights for the world*. It is through engaging with the world struggling in darkness at the bottom of the mountain that true and enduring transformation becomes a reality. God told Abram to **go** and here Jesus is telling Peter to **come with me**. Choices have to be made. Being a Christian is not just about faith. It is also about works, about the **doing** of the works of love set down for us by Jesus.

## *Lent is about renewing our vocation to be doers of the Word*

The season of Lent is just a way set out by the Church as a support in our Christian quest for Gospel faithfulness. It reminds us as a community of believers that we are called to be **doers**, to be **imitators** of Christ who did not just teach but who healed and **reached out** to those in need, to the outcasts and to the sinners. That is the call of the season.

Now we are starting the second week of Lent it is good to be challenged by the readings and ask ourselves: ***in what ways am I striving to be a more faithful doer of the Gospel?***

- Am I managing to open myself to what the Spirit is saying to me and to the Church? That maybe there are new directions I am being called to undertake?...The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5,6,7 is not a bad place to search for the “more” to my present discipleship.
- Am I striving to explore ways of more fully collaborating with the grace of God given to me at baptism so that I can reach out to others in need of God's love? In concrete ways bring the Light of Christ to those who struggle in darkness of any kind – the sick, the lonely, the depressed, the marginalised, sinners, etc?
- Am I searching for ways in which I can help grow the Body of Christ in my parish by offering my assistance to help it become a more vibrant and enlightening family in the local community? Volunteer – op.shop, pastoral care, visiting, liturgical works, cleaning, evangelism, prayer ministry, Bible Study, children's ministry, school R.E. classes, etc, etc, etc?

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