

**SERMON PREACHED AT ST ANDREW'S WALKERVILLE ON SUNDAY OCTOBER 29,  
2017 BY THE REVEREND STUART LANGSHAW, LOCUM TENENS.**

**EIGHTEENTH SERMON IN THE SERIES ABOUT HOLY COMMUNION**

**THE DISMISSAL. APBA PAGE 144, #34**

This has been a very long series of sermons about the Holy Communion Service. We started on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, and there have been 18 sermons in the series. In all that time we missed only one Sunday, and that was because of a St Andrew's School service of baptism and admission to Holy Communion.

There are just 15 words in the version of the Dismissal that we use here at St Andrew's. "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen.**"

As we have been discovering on this sermon journey, there is a great deal more here than meets the eye. Even the first word is significant. "**Go.**" You will recall that when Peter, James and John were witnesses to the transfiguration, Peter was all for staying up there on the mountain in that special location. He wanted the experience to linger and not to be spoiled by the details of the crowds down below where there were need and sickness to be dealt with. "Let's stay here," he said to Jesus. "Let's build three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Let's make this marvellous experience permanent." But Jesus in effect said, "Go." Up on the mountain was not where Christian service had to be given to the needy. "Go." Jesus was saying, "You've been so blessed and so privileged to see the transfiguration. Take the significance of that event down into the crowd. Let it inform and enrich what you will do in my name."

And "**Go,**" is the word that comes to us. We have seen and done and understood and touched and tasted so much in the hour or so of the Holy Communion Service. But here in church is not where our Christian service has to be given to the communities where we live. "Go" to our homes ... "Go" to our organisations; "Go" to our work. "Go" to our friends." Take the significance of all that we have seen and done and understood and touched and tasted here into our homes and lives and work-a-day world. At the end of the Holy Communion service, we don't simply leave Church. We "Go." With purpose, with strength and with joy, we "Go." And we go "**in peace.**"

Last Sunday Helen (Gibson-White the Associate priest) developed for us the concept of peace as we have it in the Communion Service, and she reminded us about the peace that Christ came to give. At The Dismissal we go "in peace" – in peace with those with whom we have shared the service; in peace with God who has blessed us and engraced us as the service has moved along through its various phases. We don't go beligerently to confront and convert every person we see ... we go "in peace." We don't go at sixes and sevens with our selves and with our emotion. We go "in peace." We don't go in fear, dreading what the week may hold. We go "in peace."

And we have our commission for our mission – "**to love and serve the Lord.**" We have our eyes fixed on Christ and his teachings ... we have our eyes fixed on Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit with us ... we love and serve the Lord. It's an interesting feature of our Christian faith that the more we love and serve the Lord, the more we love and serve those we meet day by day. Saint Benedict was a great and famous Christian who lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E., and he wrote a rule to be followed by those who lived together in Christian

communities. When Benedictines greet each other they say, “The Christ in me greets the Christ in you.” When we love and serve the Lord, we become aware of “the Christ in other people.” Those who come to the Magdalene Centre for the Saturday night dinner as clients and helpers have “Christ in them.” When we visit the sick, and when we catch up with friends simply to spend time with them, we are greeting “the Christ in them.” When Girls Night Out meets each month, when the Men’s Breakfast meets, we spend time with our friends there, recognising and greeting the “Christ in them.” That’s why, when we love and serve the Lord, we are also loving and serving other people ... touching and being touched by “the Christ in them.” For us to see “the Christ in others” we have to be ready to look beyond the surface ... for us to see “the Christ in others” we have to set aside our preconceived notions ... to see “the Christ in others” we may need to put down our long-held antagonisms. For us to see “the Christ in others” we need to see the children of our parish as our spiritual equals who have Christ in them. “To love and serve the Lord” is so very easy to say ... but it can be so very challenging to do consistently.

The congregation’s response in The Dimissal is very challenging also. **“In the name of Christ.”** **“At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”** (Philippians 2:9). When Jesus’ disciples returned from their mission, they reported to Jesus, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.” (Luke 10:17). The name of Christ is not used merely to distinguish Christ from other people (although it does do that). The name of Christ has its own inherent power, its own inherent dignity and status. The name of Christ brings the power of Christ, and the gravitas of Christ to all we do. When we speak, and serve, and live, and relate in the name of Christ, our speaking and living and serving is coloured and strengthened and made holy by that great and wonderful name.

Door-to-door salespersons who want to sell us insurance or a phone plan, come to us in the name of their company. They represent their company. And when we do things in the name of Christ, we are representing Christ. It is a great and terrible responsibility. People who know that we are Christians look at our lives, and they tend to judge Christ by the way they see us speaking, and relating and acting. A very convicting statement that may be made to us by other people is when they say, “And you call yourself a Christian!” The name of Christ may be powerful, but it also requires us to conduct ourselves all the time in ways that truly and consistently represent Christ.

And so we come to the end of this series of sermons. Helen and I hope, not that you will remember everything we have said, but that from time to time something from this series will pop into our minds. But may it be that as a result of this long series, all of us, not-ordained and ordained alike, may value more and more the treasure that is ours in the service of Holy Communion. (1172 words)