



# Sunday Reflection

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Pentecost

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 14 June 2020

# Pentecost 2

while all Church worship in the buildings is suspended

On this 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Pentecost, and the first Sunday after Trinity, we continue to give thanks for God's promise of salvation, revealed to us in the Father's loving care, the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus, and the constant help of the Holy Spirit.

## Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'."** Matthew 10:5-6

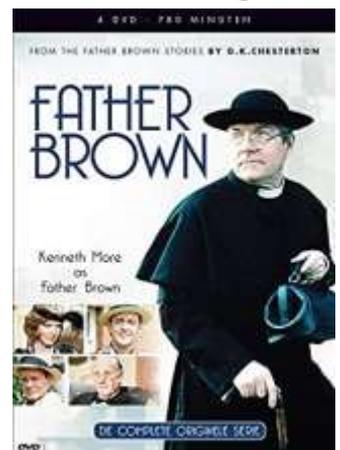
### An Illustration to set the scene



G. K. Chesterton is probably best known for his Father Brown detective stories about a priestly sleuth. Chesterton also asked the thought-provoking question: **"If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"** What a

challenge!

In some countries being convicted of Christianity results in severe punishment, even death. Yet in



other parts of the world people seeking asylum, who claim to be fleeing persecution for their religious faith, are asked questions by officials to “prove” their faith. These might include, for example, a requirement to name the twelve disciples, recite the Ten Commandments or state how many books there are in the Bible. If an asylum seeker fails to answer superficial questions such as these, he or she may be returned to their country of birth, potentially to face persecution. Without having heard today’s Gospel, even regular churchgoers might struggle to name the twelve, particularly as lists in the various Gospel accounts differ slightly. Would correct answers really prove someone a Christian? Or vice versa?

### **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

The instructions Jesus gives in today’s Gospel reading to those twelve disciples might at first seem to be at odds with what we know about him. “Go nowhere among the Gentiles,” he says, “and enter no town of the Samaritans.” Does he really mean that the good news of the kingdom should not be shared with foreigners?

Fortunately, we know the good news did spread beyond Israel. We also know that this was done with the blessing of Jesus, indeed on his later instructions. For at the end of Matthew’s Gospel, the final time he appears to the disciples after the resurrection, he tells them, “Go... and make disciples of all nations”.

In his ministry Jesus never excluded those outside the Jewish faith. On the contrary, he healed a Roman centurion’s servant and Samaritan lepers, and discussed theology with a Samaritan woman. Foreigners, outcasts, women – nobody was outside the scope of his love. So why, in today’s reading, does he tell the disciples to go only to the lost sheep of Israel? Why just the

Jewish people, who had frequently lost sight of God's loving promise to them, worshipping idols or turning faith into lists of petty rules?

Well, you need to start somewhere – and it's best to start with what, or who, you know. Even Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, began with the Jewish communities in those places he visited. Only after they rejected the good news did he turn to the Gentiles. And of those twelve disciples, we know from elsewhere in the Gospels that Andrew first told his brother Peter about Jesus, and Philip told his friend Nathanael, usually identified with Bartholomew in today's list. They started with those who were closest to them.

What did they tell? In the words of Jesus, the good news that "the kingdom of heaven has come near". But words were not enough. Those disciples were instructed to heal and to help, just as Jesus had.

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives**

Learning and reciting lists can never prove anybody's faith – ours or that of an asylum seeker. Reading the Bible is obviously important, but only a living, loving relationship with Jesus can really mark us out as Christians – wherever we come from. As disciples, Jesus sends us to proclaim the best of all good news – that in Jesus himself the kingdom of heaven has come near. His life, ministry, teaching, death and resurrection prove how much God loves us. In Jesus, who was born and died as a human, the God of heaven and earth, all the earth, has come near to us.

Beginning with those closest to us, we're sent to share that good news in what we do as well as in what we say. This is about how we help others, both those near to us and foreigners, rather than about how many lists we can learn. The good news helps us to

love all our neighbours as ourselves, because we're sharing our love for Jesus, and God's love for us all, however little we may think we deserve it. As Chesterton's Father Brown once said,

**"You matter. I matter. We matter to God  
– God only knows why."**

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Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God's spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**