

## **Men on a Mission**

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8 NIV)*

The start of June finds us between the dates when we remember the ascension of Jesus and Pentecost when the Spirit came in power on the disciples. The verse above from Acts comes from Jesus' final words before the ascension and reminds us what the coming of the Holy Spirit was all about – mission.

It might have seemed like mission impossible: 11 men perhaps with some other followers of Jesus (120 if we look at Acts 1:15) were going to take the message of Jesus out from Jerusalem to the whole world. Yet the story of Acts is that story, as the good news about Jesus turns the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Of course, nothing is impossible for God, so empowered by the Holy Spirit and with the message about Jesus to testify to, they were unstoppable.

What can we learn from this? Well perhaps most importantly, we must believe that the task of re-evangelising the UK and Rochdale are possible. We have the message of the eye-witnesses of Jesus' life, death and resurrection in our Bibles. We have our own testimonies of trusting him. We have the power of the Holy Spirit. It's true that over the last century there has been a great turn against the Christian faith in our country, but still God is pleased to call his people to himself (John 6:44).

Having believed that the mission is possible, we need to act. We too are men and women on a mission to be his witnesses. In the period between Ascension and Pentecost we have been encouraged by our Archbishops to pray for mission in the Thy Kingdom Come initiative. In this period let's make a special effort to pray for our friends and family who don't know Jesus and our communities, most of whom don't know Jesus. As we pray, let's pray for opportunities to be witnesses for Jesus.

When we've prayed, let's have the courage to take opportunities. Why not invite someone to church or a church event – perhaps someone who used to come but you hasn't for a while? When someone asks you what you do on Sunday or at the weekend, why not talk about your faith? When discussions arise at work or at home or in the pub, why not try and give a Christian perspective?

One day Jesus is coming back (Acts 1:11), but let's make the most of the time we have to share the wonderful news of sins forgiven, relationship with God restored and hope for eternity. That way we help as many people as possible prepare for his return.

Stephen