

Thought for the week

Have you ever had to send someone you care about off on a new adventure? Maybe a child who is starting a new school, going to university or taking a trip by themselves for the first time, or it could be seeing a spouse or close friend feel nervous as they start a new job.

We often feel emotions of empathy for what they are going through – excitement, nervousness or anxiety. We might feel like we want to go with them (even if we'd just get in the way!) and, of course, we want to hear regular updates about how it's going.

In Matthew 28, Jesus is sending his disciples out – he loves them and has spent three years teaching and guiding them so they will be ready for this mission. He can do this with confidence because he's spent three years training them to imitate him and follow in his ways. His parting instructions to 'go', 'make disciples' and 'baptize and teach' aren't stand-alone items on a checklist for the disciples. There is so much more to each of these actions, and the disciples understand what is required of them because they have been shown what to do – they have participated in Jesus' work and have been given opportunities to try it out and learn for themselves during the past three years of Jesus' ministry.

This is a bit like how we don't wave off our children as they go to university and say 'remember to cook dinner for yourself', expecting them to teach themselves how to cook for the first time when they arrive. Hopefully, we have given them opportunities to learn some cooking skills at home, where they will have had some practice before they are fully responsible for this aspect of their lives.

Jesus is commissioning his disciples at the point they have been apprenticed to do all of the things he is asking of them. It might feel like a big next step to be without him by their side, but he knows they are ready and can do it.

However, Jesus also has an advantage over parents or friends sending off loved ones. He can assure them, 'I am with you always', knowing that they will be filled with the Holy Spirit and able to know his presence with them wherever they go. Jesus sends them out – and sends us out – but is also able to promise to be with them through the gift of the Holy Spirit, to the end of the age.