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A rather pompous landowner met a local farmer one morning and said to him: 'Why, Brown, you're getting quite bent. Why don't you stand up straight, like me?' In reply, Farmer Brown said: 'Do you see that field of corn?' And when the other nodded, went on, 'Well, you'll notice that the full heads hang down, and the empty ones stand up.'

As we've just heard, pompous people often make others feel small and dejected if they let them. It was mostly ordinary people who followed Jesus, not those with power. Those in power kept their distance from the masses. The word 'Pharisee', for instance, means 'separated one'. The unpretentious ordinary folk had no one to guide them spiritually - that is why Jesus said they were harassed and dejected like 'sheep without a Shepherd'. The Jewish priests were control freaks who wanted these people to cow-tow to them. Much to their annoyance, the ordinary folk were increasingly turning to Jesus - he performed miracles on their behalf and told them that they were important in God eyes and had no need to feel dejected.

So Jesus sent the apostles into this vast harvest of unlettered people with the same reassuring message. In Jesus the apostles could see at first hand God's compassion in action, not least towards themselves. Even though he chided them, on a number of occasions for their lack of faith, you never find Jesus making them feel downhearted or miserable. It is also interesting to note that Jesus never 'fired' any of his apostles, not even Judas, whom he knew was plotting behind his back.

Like the people in Jesus' time, ordinary people today can also feel dejected and harassed. When people are not taken seriously, when they rarely hear words of encouragement, when they feel excluded, when others keep reminding them of their mistakes, dejection can easily 'rear its ugly head' and cast a dark shadow over their lives.

If our children are cosseted too much or are given material things as a substitute for real love or are deprived of emotional intimacy with parents, we might be unwittingly sowing the seeds of dejection when these same children have to face difficult challenges in life later on. They won't be able to deal with the hard knocks. As the Scripture tells us, we reap what we sow.

As people of faith, let us be God's instruments in scattering the darkness and gloom of dejection which may overshadow people's lives. Just like we said last Sunday, bad guilt doesn't come from God, so also dejection has a kind of ungodly ring about it. It can lead to full blown depression. Unless we seek healing from it, it can drag us down physically and mentally.

The apostles were sent out on a mission to expel the demons of demoralization and dejection from peoples' lives. As present day apostles and disciples that too must be top of our agenda as well. Only then will we reap a fruitful harvest for the Lord.