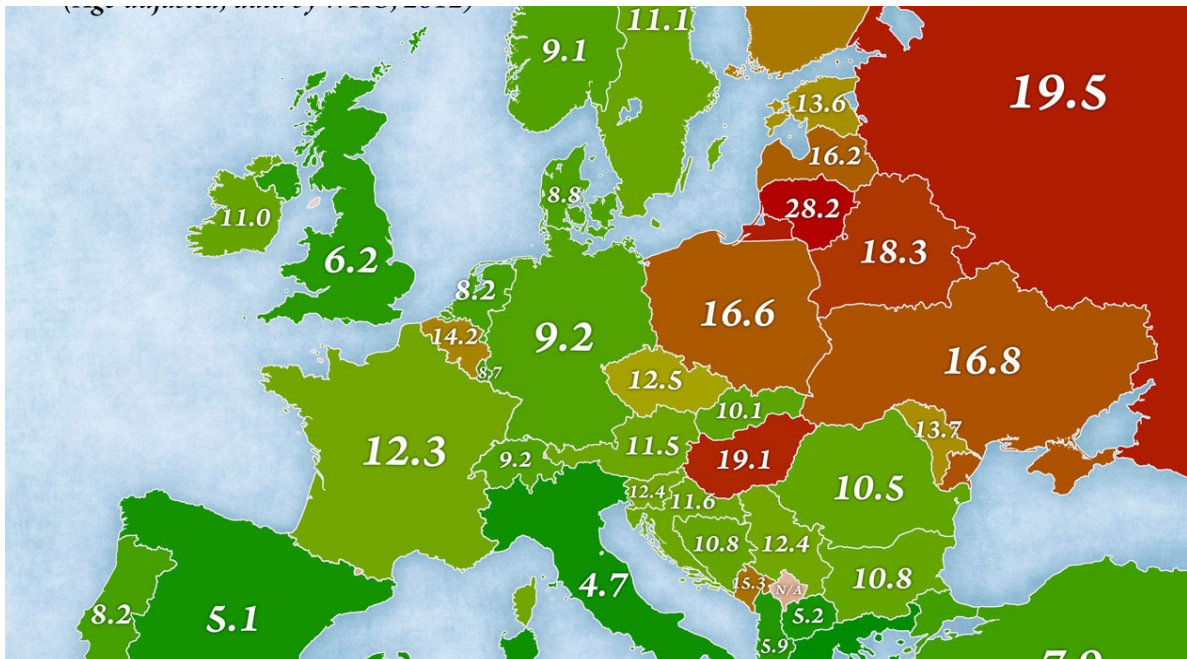


## We Live in a stressful world

- Work
- Family Commitments
- Mortgage Repayments
- Bills
- College
- Travel
- Keeping up with the Jones's
- Church
- People



Adult and Child suicide rates per 100,000 population.



## The Rabbits Foot!

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFqTf74COs4>

## Family Service Talk for 26<sup>th</sup> November 2017

We live in a world that is weighed down by anxiety and stress (slide 1).

The country we live in is currently ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the 0-25 year age bracket for suicide rates in Europe (slide 2).

We Drink too much, we misuse drugs we have a high percentage of individuals on prescription anti-depressants.  
....why?

The answer for me (and I suspect this because it is the topic of my thesis...so I had better be right) suggests that human beings are not psychologically self-sufficient. We strive to fit in and long to be a part of a community. From the moment a child is born to the time when an old aged individual dies, people devote themselves to establishing and maintaining a place in society. But what if that society which is supposed to support a sense of community is dysfunctional? Look at where we are today, people are anxious over job security, paying bills, loneliness,.... I was at a meeting last week in the church of the assumption and the speaker, Rev Dr Julian Hamilton spoke about research concerning young people and the church. He presented data from a questionnaire that suggested:

The top three fears that young people have for **themselves** are:

Exams – College and money.

The three top concerns they had for **others** were :

World war/terrorism – the environment and the future.

In other words, young people are in a state of anxiety not only for themselves, but they are concerned for the world we live in also!

Our Gospel reading today is situated at the end of Matthew's account of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. We are beginning at the end! Jesus directs the disciples to meet him at the top of the mountain and this is important, for history shows it is on mountains that God engages with His people. Noah's ark settled on the mountain and a new covenant with humanity was entered into. It was on Mount Moriah where God engaged with Abraham regarding his son Isaac. Moses interacted with God on Mount Horeb using a burning bush, The commandments were issued on Mount Sinai, it was the Mount of Olives where Jesus spoke with God and Golgotha where Jesus was crucified. Mount Zion is mentioned more than any other mountain and is associated with hope of a new kingdom of peace and justice.

But we read that some of the disciples were not convinced and doubted Jesus was real?

It is at this stage that Jesus makes an astonishing affirmation: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me". He is the Lord of history, he is the Lord of governments, he is the Lord of nations, he is the Lord of the universe.

The eleven disciples to whom Jesus is speaking here were all Jews who had left their jobs, everything that they owned, to attach themselves to this man, to become apprentice to him. That's what a disciple means, an apprentice or a student. Now, says Jesus, just as you have apprenticed yourself to me and learned from me during these past three years, now you must

invite humanity to do the same. Baptizing them into the name of the triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is a corporate event, not an individual event. You are baptized into the community of all those who profess the name of the Triune God. So it is in the context of community that people learn what discipleship means.

Next week is the beginning of Advent. Advent is a period in the Christian calendar leading up to Christmas. It is a time of hope, a time of expectation of looking forward. As Christians we hope that Christ's light will shine in the darkness of the world in which we live.

I am not sure if you have ever seen the film Mission Impossible 3? (slide 3)

Well I love movies and this was one of the best thrillers in the series. Peter Rollin's provides a good concept in his book 'the idolatry of God', but I have changed the application to suit my sermon. The film's opening sequence begins much like our Gospel reading this morning, at the end of the story and then works its way back for the next two hours to show us how it got to this point. At the very start our hero, Ethan Hawke (Tom Cruise) is sat tied to a chair. A blindfold is removed and across from him sits who he believes to be his wife. She is gagged and bound and has a gun pointed at her head. The villain of the film asks Tom for the Rabbits foot. Tom was convinced he had given him the rabbits foot already, but the villain (Philip Seymour Hoffman) says that what was given to him was certainly not the rabbits foot. Hoffman begins to count down from 10, each time asking for the foot. Panic sets in because Tom Cruise who genuinely believes he provided what was asked of him. Throughout the next 2 hours cars explode, bombs detonate, people are shot, killed, dive off buildings.... and the strange thing is that as the film progresses it becomes clear that no one knows what the rabbits foot is. Now I am in no way suggesting that we should become violent, but the point is

that although The villain or M I 5 did not fully understand what it was that they were chasing after, they were still willing to do anything to get it. They did not understand the whole meaning of the rabbits foot, but somehow, they knew the safety of the world depended on it.

Faith is hope, certain hope in Christ our lord. The Great Commission is actually sandwiched between a great affirmation on the one hand and a great promise on the other: all authority is given...I will be with you always. While we may not be absolutely sure all the time what it is that we are seeking, faith motivates us to proceed. This faith is encouraged and supported by the trinity, but it is also supported by the community of the church. As a church we have much to offer in times of hopelessness. Throughout the bible, the people of God found themselves in impossible situations. Constantly in a state of impending doom due to wars, famines and exile, the people of God worked together to build a faith that was worth sharing. Their trust in God supported renewal and provided liberation and hope. Jesus on the mountain confirms that it is God's desire for his disciples to share the good news concerning Christ. And while we may be slightly afraid or exhausted or busy, it should remain our priority. We are called to cross barriers in engaging and loving people who are different to us. Not just associating with those who are like us. This is the example that Jesus set in the preceding gospel of Matthew. His message and willingness to integrate with all communities whether socially accepted or outcasts transformed the world. The disciples continued his ministry because they saw the profound effect that Jesus had when he engaged with people. He provided assured hope for those who were exhausted, provided healing to the sick, included outcasts and challenged societal norms. This is church! (video clip 4)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFqTf74COs4>