

Sunday 21st July 2024

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity

Gospel Reading

Mark 6.30-34

Feeding the Five Thousand

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. 33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. 34 As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Mark 6:53-56

Healing the Sick in Gennesaret

53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. 54 When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, 55 and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the market-places, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Other Readings: 2 Samuel 7.1-14a

Psalm 89.20-37

Ephesians 2.11-22

Homily

In the Gospel reading today, Jesus' disciples report back to him everything they had done. As we know, they had done a lot: Taken time in teaching others, praying with them and for them, moving around much, and sharing Jesus's message with as many as they could. Jesus' initial response on hearing this, is to tell them to go to a deserted place and to rest a while. Jesus was concerned they had, had no leisure time, and not even time to eat. So, he tells them to go somewhere they will not be contacted by others and to rest. He does not suggest while their ministry and mission is so effective they keep going; Rather he focuses on them and tells them to rest. He does not actually suggest they do this, he *tells* them to do it. He recognises the personal impact their work has likely taken, and focuses on them as individuals, telling them to rest for a while. Of course, we all know that in resting they would be able to come back more refreshed, more focused and more energised for the task at hand.

We also hear in the Gospel passage that in response to Jesus saying this, the disciples do go together in a boat to a deserted place. However, people see them going and follow them. Jesus sees this happening, noticing that the disciples are not likely to get the break they needed, and

he steps in. He teaches the crowd, and we hope in doing so the disciples were able to get a bit of rest.

We hear Jesus taught the crowd, instead of dismissing them, as he had compassion for them. He had compassion for his disciples, and for the wider crowd. He saw they were like a sheep without a shepherd, and he steps in to fulfil the role of the missing shepherd, acting as their leader instinctively -Not a remote leader who does not understand the needs of his people, but a leader who is first and foremost compassionate, who sees where the need is and responds. In this situation Jesus recognises the vulnerability of the human nature; He teaches those who need teaching, and encourages those who need rest, to rest. He is concerned about people's wellbeing, as we also heard in the Ephesians reading where he proclaims peace to all, those who were near, *and* those who were far off. Jesus is a leader who desires all his people to have their needs met; spiritual, emotional and physical. A leader who focuses on each individual, as well as caring for the whole group.

We are all still in need of this peace; And we are all encouraged by Jesus to accept it, to take rest when needed, to look after our wellbeing. This will of course be different for all of us; For some it might be like the disciples going away somewhere new with others, while for some it might be staying at home alone. For the disciples, it was a break and a change in their everyday tasks, in order that they would come back refreshed to continue in their everyday tasks -The mission God had given them in their lives.

If we were to read on in this part of Mark's Gospel, what follows is the feeding of the 5,000. An event where many were cared for by being fed. Bread is blessed, broken and shared, in a parallel fashion to the Last Supper and a similar way to sharing Holy Communion, where we are physically and spiritually fed. This is a reminder again of the importance God places on us being fed spiritually and physically; of the significance and value placed on *us* in looking after and caring for our physical bodies and our spiritual selves. The readings today then remind us we are encouraged by God to do this, to care for ourselves, our own well-being - our physical bodies as well as the spiritual and emotional. We are encouraged to prioritise this, so that we can thrive, as individuals and a community, and in order that the mission we are involved with will also flourish. We are urged to rest, to lay down our worries and concerns, and our work for a time, and not to feel guilty about this. Because God does not want us weary. God longs for us to be refreshed and restored, to know peace, the peace offered to us all.

Conversation Questions

1. How do you find inner peace?
2. What could you do to provide yourself with more rest and refreshment in your life?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you?
What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern
both our hearts and bodies
in the ways of your laws
and the works of your commandments;
that through your most mighty protection, both here and ever,
we may be preserved in body and soul;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

(or)

Lord God,
your Son left the riches of heaven
and became poor for our sake:
when we prosper save us from pride,
when we are needy save us from despair,
that we may trust in you alone;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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