

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 21 July 2024 - The Eighth Sunday of Trinity

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Jeremiah 23. 1-6; Psalm 23; Ephesians 2. 11-22; Mark 6. 30-34 and 53-56

Homily

Today's homily has been written by Susan Rawlings, LLM, Madingley (Benefice)

Today's gospel reading comes from chapter 6 of St Mark's gospel. It is a chapter full of action and incident, as much of Mark's gospel is - fast-paced and urgent. First, Jesus goes to his home town of Nazareth. But the people there, his family, friends and neighbours simply can't believe that the son of their village carpenter could be the Messiah. So, in the face of this rejection, which must have disappointed Jesus deeply, he moves on with his disciples. Then Jesus sends the disciples out to try their hand at preaching the gospel. He sent them out in pairs round the countryside to proclaim a message of repentance and to heal anyone they met who was sick. After being rejection at Nazareth, Jesus sustains another blow. He hears that King Herod has executed his cousin John - John who baptised Jesus in the river Jordan. Herod was afraid of John, and even more afraid of his own wife. When she demanded John's head on a platter, as a reward for her daughter's lovely dancing, Herod gave it to her. Bitter news indeed for Jesus.

The next thing that happens is that the disciples, whom Jesus had sent round the countryside to teach and to heal, came back from their tour of duty. Just imagine it, all of them clustering round Jesus, wanting to tell him their stories. No doubt Jesus listened to them with his full attention. And, with his usual understanding, he saw that they were tired out and he said to them "Come to a deserted place by yourselves and rest a while." (Mark 6:30). Mark tells us that many people were coming and going in a great bustle of activity and the disciples hadn't even had the chance of a bite to eat. We all know the feeling - coming in from a busy day and the children need their tea, the cat wants feeding, your next-door neighbour has lost his house keys, and so on. So, it was with Jesus. No peace. He urges the disciples on to a boat on the lake to look for a deserted place. But the crowd hurried round on foot from all the towns and villages and got round the lake first. When Jesus saw that great mass of needy people "he had compassion on them", Mark tells us, "because they were sheep without a shepherd". Jesus by now must have been tired beyond anything. But he had compassion and gave himself to the needy crowd in front of him.

Then our Bible reading skips over quite a lot of verses. So, we haven't heard today about the miraculous feeding of the five thousand people which followed, or how a few loaves and fishes stretched to feed them all. In that narrative, the disciples don't seem to have had the patience and compassion of Jesus. They didn't want to bother with the people anymore.

They'd had enough. They said the people could look after themselves and go round the villages to find something to eat. But divine generosity has no end. There was enough food for everyone, with plenty left over. Jesus, still taking thought for his weary disciples, got them into a boat and sent them off to the other side of the lake. He said farewell to his beloved crowds and then, only then, did Jesus have a moment to go up on to the mountain, by himself to pray.

The story doesn't end with Jesus having a few moments of peace. In the meantime, an adverse wind sprang up in the lake, and the disciples were struggling to make headway. Jesus comes to them and they see him walking on the lake. He spoke to them, and fear left them. He got into the boat and the wind ceased.

In the final part of today's reading, v 53-56 we see Jesus once again surround by crowds when the boat was moored at Genesareth. Wherever he went, people recognised Jesus and brought him those who were sick to be healed.

Jesus upheld a punishing schedule. Apart from his brief respite in prayer on the mountain, Jesus did not stop. He kept on going. We may feel exhausted just listening to it.

One of the most beautiful verses in this whole reading is v. 34: "Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd". Jesus saw his people needed him and he met their needs. He recognised the needs of the disciples to have rest and to be fed, and to take time to be with him, with God and he encouraged them to pace themselves. They had to learn that it was not their ability to do everything that mattered, so much as their focus on Jesus, for it was his compassion and not their action that brought healing and peace to the storm. God can keep us all in sight and care, but we are just human and need to eat and sleep and work together to care for those on whom God has compassion.

Ultimately Jesus gave his life, all he had, for his people. He held nothing back for himself. Such is the enormity of God's generosity. By his death and resurrection Jesus brings life in all fullness. We receive this generosity and fullness of life and from this find more resources to sustain us. Jesus accompanies us and shows compassion to us and that is what we need to take away from this narrative and not that we are superhuman and don't need to sleep.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?

- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

The Lord is our shepherd, and we are the sheep of his pasture. Let us bring to him our cares and concerns for the Church and for the world.

We pray for the Church, that in its various ministries, it may never lead anyone astray, but will always follow faithfully the way of Jesus Christ, the loving shepherd of his sheep.

Lord, hear us

Lord graciously hear us

We pray for the world we inhabit, the world we have inherited, and will pass on to successive generations. Teach us to look after it carefully and wisely, to share its gifts more fairly and work together to ease its sufferings.

Lord, hear us

Lord graciously hear us

We pray for those who are ill and those who look after them that even in pain and anxiety they may recognise their loving Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who also suffered and was full of care and compassion for his people.

Lord, hear us

Lord graciously hear us

We pray for all of us here, and the families we represent, that in following our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, we may live generously for others.

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us

We pray for those who have died, for those who ache with sorrow at their going. We commend them all to your unfailing care which carries us throughout this life and onwards into eternity.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

Eternal Father strong to save

Father hear the prayer we offer

In heavenly love abiding

The God of love my shepherd is

The king of love my shepherd is

The Lord's my shepherd

Amazing grace

All my hope on God is founded

I heard the voice of Jesus say

Forth in the name of Christ I go

Take up thy cross the Saviour said

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult

Be thou my guardian and my guide

Activities to accompany the service:

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.com/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@ lectionary resource)