



Reflections & Prayers for Sunday
18 July 2021
The seventh Sunday after Trinity



“Compassion is the sometimes fatal capacity for feeling what it’s like to live in somebody else’s skin. It is the knowledge that there can never really be peace and joy for me until there is finally peace and joy for you too.”

Frederick Beuchner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker’s ABC*



StJohnsAL5

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Readings for this Sunday

You may want to find your Bible and read the lessons set for this week:

2 Samuel 7:1-14a

Psalms 89:20-37

Ephesians 2:11-end

Mark 6:30-34, 53-end

Jesus' ministry teaching and healing

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. 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. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. 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.

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

Reflection from Lauryn Awbrey

“He saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them.” Today’s Gospel reading from Mark describes Jesus’ ministry, summing it up with this description: “Jesus saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them, and he began to teach them many things. ...Wherever he went into the villages or cities or farms they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.”

Being with people, teaching and healing – this was the heart of who Jesus was.

When I was teaching GCSE RE, and trying to explore Christianity with bored Year 10 students, I tried to impress one basic fact on them: Jesus saw people and he had compassion for them. I told them to include that in every exam question about the Christian faith.

I love the various Bible passages that include this phrase. A few examples: when people crowded to see Jesus, “he had compassion for them and cured their sick.” (Mt 14:14) When Jesus saw the widow of Nain, whose son had also died, “he had compassion for her and said, ‘Do not weep.’” (Lk 7:13) In the story of the Good Samaritan, it is the foreigner, the Samaritan, who saw the need of a fallen traveller, and had compassion on him. “Go thou and do likewise”, Jesus said.

The words for ‘compassion’ and ‘pity’ in the original languages of the Bible are also frequently translated ‘mercy’, and the words are used interchangeably. My handy dandy Dictionary of the Bible explains the terms:

“When applied to God or to Jesus Christ, ‘mercy’ can denote an inner feeling of sympathy or love which is expressed outwardly in helping action; it can mean an affection or yearning similar to that of a parent for their child; it can signify simply forgiveness. Generally, however, it denotes the divine love, manifested in saving acts of grace, which God holds for his covenant people. Human mercy, on the other hand is usually a consideration manifested in outward works.”

Jesus’ feelings of compassion always led to action on his part: forgiveness, healing, wholeness. His compassion – which is a physical manifestation of God’s compassion – is extended to us. We too are offered forgiveness, healing, and wholeness.

St Paul tells us that we, as followers of Christ, God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, are to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, and meekness. For us, like for Jesus, compassion involves action.

As we continue to cope with the Covid pandemic, it can be a challenge to heed this call. Impatience and irritation seem to dominate my emotional framework... and I know from conversations with others that it's not just me! So to read about Jesus' compassion, and to be reminded of the call to be a compassionate follower of Christ, is timely, a helpful reminder of the imperative to see others' needs, and to remember that our lives are bound together as we seek healing and wholeness.

Prayers

A collect for this week:

Lord of all power and might,
the author and giver of all good things:
graft in our hearts the love of your name,
increase in us true religion,
nourish us with all goodness,
and of your great mercy keep us in the same;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Prayers for others and for ourselves:

We pray for God's grace.
Lord, receive our praise and hear our prayer.

Lord God, through your grace we are your people:
through your Son you have redeemed us;
in your Spirit you have made us your own.

We pray for ... (*the Church*)

Make our hearts respond to your love.
Lord, receive our praise and hear our prayer.

We pray for ... (*the world*)

Make our lives bear witness to your glory in the world.
Lord, receive our praise and hear our prayer.

We pray for ... (*the sick and those in need*)

Make our wills eager to obey, and our hands ready to heal.

Lord, receive our praise and hear our prayer.

We give you thanks for ...

Make our voices one with all your people in heaven and on earth.

Lord, hear our prayers

that we may love you with our whole being

and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. Amen.

A blessing for today:

May God, the fountain of all wisdom, give you rest, renewal, and wholeness.

May Christ, who has broken down the dividing wall and made us one body, one household, keep you in his reconciling peace.

May the Holy Spirit guide you each day in divine compassion and love.

And the blessing of our benevolent God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you and uphold you always.

Amen.

Parish Prayers for the week ahead

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	The Anglican Church of Rwanda
Monday	The Diocese of South Dakota – The Episcopal Church
Tuesday	The Diocese of Dallas – The Episcopal Church
Wednesday	The Diocese of Damaturu – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Thursday	The Diocese of Dar-es-Salaam – The Anglican Church of Tanzania
Friday	The Diocese of Davao – The Episcopal Church in the Philippines
Saturday	The Diocese of Saint Davids – The Church in Wales

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Parish of Great Amwell with St Margaret's (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Monday	Parish of Hertford, All Saints (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Tuesday	Parish of Hertford, St Andrew with St Nicholas (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Wednesday	Parish of Hertingfordbury (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)

