

## Sermon Trinity 8 2020 Matthew 14: 13-21, Isaiah 55:1-5

**Preacher: Jane Quinton**

**Curate**

I want to begin by saying that I have woven in some of Liz's sermon from Sunday into my talk today. Unfortunately because of a technical hitch the recording of Sunday's service meant that we ended up with no sound! Therefore it couldn't be uploaded on to our Facebook page, and people couldn't get the benefit of what Liz had to say. But as I had been listening to Liz preach on Sunday, I was struck by how we had both been led down a similar path of thought in preparing for this gospel reading. So I guess this morning's sermon is a bit of a double-act!

Now I must admit that whenever I read the story of *Jesus feeding the 5,000* it always reminds me of a friend, who is also a vicar, who regularly seemed to trust his wife with replicating such a miracle, returning home after a service on many occasions with the news that several people would shortly be joining them for lunch! Although it would always be amazing what she could rustle up, her catering skills were nothing compared to the awesome hospitality of Jesus, in what is probably one of the most well-known of His miracles. A story which reminds us of the abundant generosity of God, *and* how He can do so much with so little!

Which is indeed an encouraging and reassuring promise that we have from God.....

But not the only message to be gleaned from this particular story.

Similarly to Liz, I had immediately been drawn to the opening couple of verses, which begin by telling us that Jesus had just heard something that had actually made Him want to be alone on the day in question. Looking back on the previous verses I was reminded that the news Jesus had just received was that of the death of his cousin, John the Baptist. No wonder He had wanted to be in a deserted place by Himself.....which for Jesus would have meant time alone with just God the Father..... It is a very natural human reaction after the death of a loved one to want time by ourselves.... and to try and draw strength and comfort from God; and to find rest and stillness and peace in Him, as we try and process our loss.

But as we know, Jesus never got to enjoy that private time and space.... For no sooner does He arrive on the shore than thousands of people turn up, all of them having travelled by foot to see Him.

Now I have to confess that when I just want some quiet time to myself, and not even in such drastic circumstances as Jesus found Himself, I can get a bit grumpy if that time gets interrupted or disrupted! But not Jesus! No, as we read, Jesus sees this great crowd of people and 'he has **compassion** for them.' ... Although the horrific nature of John's death will no doubt have brought home the dangers that inevitably lay ahead for Him too, Jesus looks at these people, and puts aside his own grief, and ministers to their needs.....and not just for an hour or 2 either, but for the rest of the day!

And even then His concern for them continues on another level. As I've no doubt that this incredible feeding that takes place there as the sun is setting and people are getting tired and hungry is another compassionate response to their needs.

Because God knows all of our needs – physical, emotional, spiritual and mental.

And I think C-19 has made *us* far more aware of this myriad of needs that we all have, as life has drastically changed around us. And as I have mentioned before it is really important to acknowledge to ourselves and to others, these needs that we have that have been accentuated by our new circumstances.

Of course there has been an amazing outpouring of community spirit and compassion over the past few months, in helping to ensure that everyone has sufficient food and basics.

But so many people have also discovered mental health needs, emotional needs, and spiritual needs coming to the surface during lockdown – whether because they've been living by themselves and struggling with silence and isolation; or because they've been living with others in the stresses that that can bring; or maybe simply because they've not been able to get outside and enjoy the peace and replenishment that being in the natural world affords us. In what used to be our normal life we could make ourselves busy and avoid coming head to head with our issues – but C19 has brought them to the fore; and that can be very hard to deal with.

But Jesus – God - has great compassion on these needs too....

And He longs to feed us with spiritual sustenance, so that we can discover who we really are in God; so that we can find the stillness and peace that only God can give: “the peace of God which passes all understanding”. God longs for us to be able to simply ‘rest in Him’ and know that He is always there for us....

Through all that we are going through God looks on all of His creation, and has compassion.

Because compassion, as described in the dictionary is the ‘concern for the suffering of others’. And compassion underpins love. In the little talk I did for the One Big Family service on Sunday, I described Jesus as seeing this big crowd and loving them. Because God’s ‘*concern for our sufferings*’ is what lies beneath His great love for us.

And similarly compassion is needed to underpin any love we are able to show to others. Because true love means we have a concern, that we care when we see people suffer.....Love and compassion go hand in hand.

There will have been people whom Jesus saw on that day, people whom His heart went out to, whose suffering He saw and did something about, who may have later been amongst those baying for His blood..... But all Jesus saw on that day were people He loved with compassion.

Jesus shows us that it is God’s desire that we also look with compassion on each other. To be concerned for one another’s sufferings... and, to assist God in healing the wounds of His creation, by embracing and loving it in all its diversity, even those whom we might regard as enemies.....

As Jesus looked with compassion on the people before Him, and then did so much with so little .... I pray that God today may take the compassion that we have, however small we think that may be, and increase it beyond all proportion!

AMEN