

Sunday 22nd July 2018 'Jesus, Thou art all compassion'
Mark 6:30-34 & 53-56 (Jer 23:1-6 Ps 23 Eph 2:11-22)

Intro

Thank you Penny for your message last week... I have remembered that image of the plumb line several times during the week and it has helped me to weigh up my options when making decisions and hopefully take the one in line with Christ.

This week we are in the next part of Marks Gospel, after Jesus has sent out the 12 to teach and heal and after the beheading of John the Baptist by Herod in response to the request of Herodias' daughter.

Word for this week is COMPASSION

3 subsections to our gospel reading this week. In each one of them we see clearly the compassion of Jesus

vs 30+31

Apostles - the ones sent out as messengers - return from their mission of word and deed and Jesus sees that they are weary, there was not even time to eat and so he invites them 'Come away to a DESERTED PLACE for rest' a time set aside for sustenance
Jesus saw their need to spend time with him, to share of their adventures, and to take time for the basics of life - rest and food

Interesting that Mark uses the phrase 'deserted place' or wilderness.

Israels history involves many events in the wilderness... many of which were times of struggle and testing but also of encounter with God, protection, renewal and direction

God also formed a new community in the desert as he led his chosen people out of Egypt and into the promised land

The multitudes and the disciples are being formed in to a new community around Jesus who is full of compassion

vs 32-34

Jesus and the apostles went away on the boat and as he went ashore he was greeted by a great crowd

People had recognised the disciples and Jesus when they saw them and they had hurried ahead of them to their 'quite place' !!

Response..... mine may well have been anger or frustration or impatience!!!

Jesus - what was his reaction to the inconvenience of the crowd?

He had COMPASSION for them

Why? because they were like sheep without a shepherd

Sheep + no shepherd = danger !!

God had accused the leaders of Israel for scattering His sheep (Ezekiel 34)

He had prophesied that the Messiah - the Shepherd - would come (Micah 5:2,4)

Jesus says in John 10 that he is The Good Shepherd

Just as sheep without a shepherd become pray to the dangers around them, so too do we

Jesus saw the people, he saw their need of teaching and leadership and he had compassion

Compassion is the essence of the one who created us

In German the word for compassion is mitleid = with suffering

Not pity - that you can do from a distance

Compassion involves getting alongside, getting your hands dirty

It is a deep deep yearning in the pit of your stomach

We sing in that great hymn the words 'Jesus, Thou are all compassion'

The verse that contains those words starts 'Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down...'

Jesus, the Son of God, came in to the world because of His love and compassion

When on earth he got stuck in, he got out and mingled with the people, he got his hands dirty... literally

He touched sick and dead people - a great sign of being made dirty. Special rituals had to be gone through in order to be 'made clean' again

He made breakfast on the fire on the beach for his disciples

He was beaten and hung on the cross for us, because of his compassion for us all

Jesus had compassion for the great crowd... he saw their need and and their racing about

He saw that they were like sheep without a shepherd and had compassion for them and began to teach them many things, the truths of the Kingdom, the new Kingdom, the new community

He would go to any length to teach and heal and care, even though it meant that he did not get his quiet rest time with his disciples

vs 53-56

Another journey across the lake, this time to Gennesaret which was on the plains on the edge of the lake. It was a place of hot springs where people had gathered over many years to seek healing and relief from their illnesses

People went there to bathe in the springs and seek healing

Jesus saw them and wherever He went the people brought the sick to him for healing

Where - in the everyday place of the market place

They even begged to touch the tassel / fringe of his cloak and were healed

Compassion

Jesus is, at his very core, compassionate

He sees beyond the masks that we can be so good at wearing

He sees beyond our organised, together appearances and sees the real us.

The real me and you that most people never see, either because we cover it up well, or because they do not look closely enough with the eyes of Jesus

How many of us are feeling a bit lost or lonely or dispirited or afraid or sick or.....

Jesus looks on us with compassion, that deep, gut wrenching emotion that leads to action, that means he will come along side us and minister to us

A more modern song starts with the words 'Everyone needs compassion, love that's never failing..' It goes on to say 'So take me as you find me, all my fears and failures; fill my life again'

Jesus is full of compassion for you and for me and we all need Him and he has compassion for all of us

He brings His word and deed, his teaching and action to us

And what is the response of the church to Christ's compassion?

Our Diocesan vision is to be a more Christ-like church

What does that mean if we are to be more compassionate as a church?

Maybe we too need to learn to see people as Jesus does

GLASSES

At Easter the children (of different ages!) had some of these to colour to remind us that we are called to be witnesses to Jesus resurrection

But glasses also help us to see things differently

What if we, as part of the church, were able to see people and situations as Jesus sees them?

Beyond the facade, under the surface, beyond the stereotype

To see the real need deep inside even if it is not initially obvious

The ordinary people, those we might normally dismiss or even dislike may well be in need of help
No matter how together they may appear on the outside because they may be lost and without a Shepherd

Jesus felt that deep, gut wrenching compassion for the people and when we learn to see others as Jesus did then we want the same things for them
For them to be found and forgiven and to find life in all its abundance in Jesus

The people begged to touch the fringe of his cloak for healing
What if the church were to be the fringe of God's cloak
A place where people recognised God's compassion and Godly power and came... came to receive compassion and healing

How are you feeling today?
Tired? Frenetic? Lost?
Jesus has compassion for you and wants to bring you love and healing and guidance and protection and sustenance Just like any good shepherd would for his sheep

And he longs for us, as part of His church, to experience and then demonstrate that compassion for those we meet each and every day who are tired and weary and lost and in need of his love and grace
Maybe he longs for us, as in the words of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, to be joined together and growing into a holy place, where we are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God so that His compassion is heard and demonstrated through us.
Amen