

Sunday 18 July 2021 - Trinity 7

Sermon Notes

Opening comments

- Today's Gospel reading contains a significant gap at its centre - the gap where Mark reports the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus walking on water.
- What can we learn from the prologue and epilogue to these incidents?

Jesus, compassion and generosity

- Compassion to the disciples when they return, probably exhausted, from their first missionary activity. 'Come away and rest awhile' foiled by the fleet-footed crowd.
- Compassion too for the sick who needed Jesus' healing touch. Jesus generous with the special gift he had and didn't stint himself.
- v34 - 'Jesus 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'.

Looking back over lockdown through the lens of Jesus' compassion

- Compassion through keeping in touch with all members of our congregations: initially practical help, then a regular friendly voice; later changes to reflect wants of individuals. Still continuing - huge credit to the over 20 callers, for their diligence and compassion.
- Generosity to one another in response to serious financial shortfall last year. So many people responded, and with such generosity, that last year's problem solved and ongoing finances in a strong position.
- Jesus' response to people's needs was to 'teach them many things'. In spite of lockdown difficulties tried to maintain our worship and preaching through online services.
- When we were allowed to meet in church again, Revds Julian, Tonia and Gemma immediately led services.
- Lent Lectures, Resurrection and Ascension lectures, new initiative of Thoughts for the Day, courses and prayer.
- In all of this tried, imperfectly but sincerely, to follow Jesus' example in our compassion for one another. Not just maintaining community but enhancing it.

Looking forward after lockdown

- Tomorrow, 19 July, important day with the elimination of legal restrictions.
- Also important as the day when we welcome Revd Leonard as our new Rector.
- My hope that under his leadership we will encounter new ideas, new projects, new challenges but continue to show compassion and generosity to one another in all we do.
- In this context Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 8:9 highly relevant - 'Be careful that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling-block to the weak'.
- So much to thank God for and to look forward to, with Jesus at the heart of everything.