

PENTECOST 8

18/7/21

CAVES BEACH

CALL TO WORSHIP

Christ is our peace;

we come together to praise and to pray in his name.

Christ is our peace;

we find his calm in the midst of our struggles.

Christ is our peace;

we are joined by him in a caring faith community.

Christ is our peace;

we are challenged by him to oppose fear-making forces.

Christ is our peace;

God's peace, which passes all human understanding.

Opening Prayer God :inviting the presence of peace: of God renewal

Come with us to the place of rest and quietness, O God,

so that our depths of soul and spirit may know your peace.

Come with us to the place of reflection and prayer, O God,

so that we may receive the renewal that only you can give.

Come apart with our faith community, O God,

so that in the search for a fresh vision we may find the way ahead.

Come with us as we review our skills and talents, O God,

so that we may rededicate ourselves to serving those for whom Jesus cared.

Come with us and never leave us! Amen.

HYMN 569 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ofp6rdAgRrY>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Companion on our journey,

We thank you for our pathway with you.

Sometimes it is rocky and uneven.

At times there are mountains of awe

and valleys of darkness and confusion.

And yet, you honour us with your presence.

We sometimes are distracted

by the pathway of rocks, heights and depths.

Yet, today, we wish to give thanks,

for it is us who turn from your face.

Thank you for your constant presence

as we wish to journey in your company.

Loving Jesus,

You never seemed to tire, with all whom you met,

to offer loving comfort and healing for their soul.

We often are too weary to offer more to others

and in our own weariness, bring words or actions that bring harm.

Help us learn from you,

by taking rest in our days;

to pray on the mountain;
to share at a table with others;
to accept the little which is given with a lot of love;
to listen to the other as if no one else is listening;
to be generous of heart, while being aware of our need for healing too.

Loving Jesus,

We turn to you for wisdom and healing

for we do not always know the way.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Hear the stories of long ago,
of God's presence throughout all situations.

Let us hear again, today, that we do not journey alone.

Rest with God,

be held by the Spirit,

and pray with Jesus each day,

for they are waiting and listening with you.

READINGS

- **Ephesians 2: 11-22**

¹¹ So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcised” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—¹² remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one

new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.¹⁷ So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near;¹⁸ for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;²² in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

- **Mark 6:30-34, 53-56**

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.³¹ 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.³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.³⁴ 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.

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat.⁵⁴ When they got out of the boat, people at once recognised him,⁵⁵ and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.⁵⁶ 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.

HYMN 459 In Christ there is no east or west

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpITJOShix0&t=10s>

SERMON

After all the drama and pain of last week’s passage about John the Baptist we have a completely different experience this week. In his commentary on this week’s passage the Scottish Biblical Scholar, William Barclay, says: “The rhythm of the Christian life is the alternate meeting with God in the

secret place and serving people in the marketplace.” I think that this fits here very well.

We are now entering a completely different stage of the journey with Christ through Mark’s Gospel. We are invited into the inner circle with Jesus and His disciples. So we ask:

How did Jesus teach His disciples to live in what for them was a chaotic world?

Living the life that Jesus taught means having the same outlook and absorbing into our souls the very essence of Jesus’ teaching. It is a commitment calling for us to completely surrender to His way.

In this passage we see how Jesus dealt with constant interruptions. Ever compassionate and welcoming Jesus also recognised to need to step aside at times. In our weekly readings we so often hear stories of Jesus at work but the readings seem to take little notice of Him taking time out.

As I have been saying over the last few weeks Mark liked to intertwine stories throughout his Gospel and this week is no different, apart from the fact that this week we skip the middle stories of feeding the 5,000 and walking on water. We will look at those stories next week.

Here on the banks of the lake called Galilee we find the disciples coming back to Jesus with stories of their time as His missionaries. On their mission journey they had many wonderful experiences of God’s power enabling them to heal people and touching people’s inner needs. However the disciples were all tired out and they needed time to rest and recuperate. They were also hungry because there was so many people asking for their time even when they stopped to eat.

There is one word in Verse 34 which stands out for me and I think that we need to consider it in some detail. The verse says: “*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.*”

Jesus showed **compassion**! This is a common theme throughout this Gospel. It can be just a word but in Jesus’ case it is more than just a word.

Some people might like to look at synonyms to understand this word. Words like pity and empathy are often used when someone is helping another.

Pity is a word which acknowledges the suffering of another person but it avoids the idea of getting personally involved. It is almost like there is an assumption that the person might deserve their situation. Perhaps they are less significant people or they are not so important in our lives. We can often see ourselves as better than the person who we pity.

Sometimes we see empathy used instead of compassion. This is more than just pity. However there is still the impression that we are in some way superior or separate from that person. When we come across the phrase 'to walk a mile in another's shoes' we seem to infer that their shoes are not as good as ours nor are they as comfortable. When we empathise with another we are making it clear that their feelings are not necessarily our views on the situation. We do not take on their pain and suffering.

When it comes to compassion we are in a completely different situation. Compassion has the connection of 'suffering with' that person. The Greek verb for compassion is *splagchnizomai*.

The root of this word includes the root of the word for intestines. In Greek thinking the intestines were thought to be the centre of the bodies emotions. Today we speak of loving with all of our heart. In the Greek of that time people spoke of loving with all of their stomach.

Compassion is something that we feel in the very core of our being. It is what goes through our soul when we see another suffering needlessly. We can relate to needless suffering even in our own lives. It resonates in the very core of our being.

- It is the compassionate feeling that we experience when as a parent we see our child ride their bike without training wheels for the first time, especially if they grazed a knee.
- It is the connection we have with someone who has been bullied and it brings back those times when we were bullied.
- How about the time when we are in the checkout que at the supermarket and the person a few in front of us is painfully counting out their meagre cash to see if they can afford all the groceries that they have.
- It is the pain of watching a close friend go through the pain of bereavement from death or separation which brings back to us the pain of the loss of a loved one that we too have experienced.

- It is the pain of walking with a friend whose parent or partner is being ravished with something like dementia bringing back to us similar experiences with one of our parents or a spouse.
- In times like this we can have compassion for people caught up in the restrictions of a COVID 'lock-down' bringing back to us our own experiences this time last year.

When Jesus looked on those crowds who had followed him across the lake he felt their pain, their confusion and their deep desire to know of the God who their rabbis and teachers had not been able to share with them. He understood their need to know about God's love. He was suffering with them.

This means to me that when Jesus looks to each of us He feels our pain fully. He understands and connects with broken relationships, and the struggle to make ends meet as well as our deep desire to fully connect with God. So often we can seem to be like sheep running around without a shepherd to guide us.

This is where we can connect with the people in this passage. The local people hurried ahead to be able to meet with Jesus when they landed. This resonates with many of us today as Lake Galilee was not dissimilar from our very own Lake Macquarie here next to us. It was not a massive body of water where you could disappear over the horizon. No matter where the disciples steered the boat they would have been easily seen from the shore by someone. Just by travelling along the shore the people could have easily been waiting for the disciples wherever they landed.

If we still have the idea that the destination that Jesus was heading for was going to be the point at which they could relax the pure size and shape of the lake would quickly show us that this was impossible. I think that the relaxation took place as they floated on the water. I don't know how often people have commented how relaxing it is just being sit back on a boat and relax.

Jesus said: "*Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while (v. 31)*" I think that floating on the boat was the destination that Jesus had in mind. Floating out on the water they had no outside distractions, no crowds and no diversions to their time-out. In the time it took to row across the lake they would have had plenty of time to talk among themselves and share and to eat and relax. It is only on the second journey that the disciples encountered the storm, so we will address that another time.

Coming back to the crowd gathering like forlorn sheep on the shore we can see that Jesus and His disciples were the main emphasis for their journey around the lake. How often have we tried to out-guess what Jesus has in mind for us? Instead of simply following the boat around the shore, how often have we tried to out-guess the destination? Most of the time we end up being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Yet even in these times of confusion Jesus connects with us showing His compassion.

Because of His compassion there is no token band-aid for our wounds but complete connection. He doesn't just acknowledge our misdirection He comes and helps us through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This is how we learn to be more effective disciples. This is how we take our simple and tentative steps to becoming better disciples. We are always invited into healing and compassion arising out of grace. We are invited into a partnership like those first disciples. This is how His kingdom grows.

We are not all called to preach or to teach. We are simply invited to live out His message in our lives and our connection with others. We are invited to invest in the lives of those around us by our open invitation to share the grace and healing that we have experienced. As this happens the kingdom keeps growing. Miraculous things can keep happening.

We can't do this while we are trying to second-guess where the boat with Jesus will land. We do this by following the shore and witnessing His coming ashore to join with us. Sometimes it's what we assume we *should* be doing that keeps us from actually *being* what Jesus asks us to be – that is, the compassionate followers that He sends into the world to expand His ministry by being ourselves.

In the last few verses of today's reading, we see Jesus and His disciples back in the boat, heading out across the lake, this time to nearby Gennesaret. When the boat arrives at Gennesaret, there's one more little detail that deserves our attention. Verse 53 tells us that the disciples moored the boat. They anchored it, instead of dragging the boat up onto the rocky shore.

Of particular interest here is the word 'anchored.' This is the only time in the New Testament that this word is used. When we genuinely meet with the presence of Christ in rocky situations Jesus can create an anchor point for us. We no longer need to drift with the wind and the waves.

When the disciples get off the boat, more people are waiting for Jesus, eager to be healed even just by touching the fringe of His cloak. Karen Yust writes that our job as the church is to be "the fringe of Christ's cloak" to the

world. We may think that means scurrying around, trying to meet every single need that comes to our attention, but that kind of activity doesn't really offer compassion to anyone. It looks more like sheep without a shepherd, who race ahead of Jesus, instead of following him.

That kind of activity keeps us from having real compassion for those who Christ calls us to reach. And it keeps us from staying connected to Jesus himself. To be the fringe of Christ's cloak, we have to be touching Jesus ourselves. To offer healing to others, we have to allow them to touch us as we keep connected with Christ.

This is what gut-wrenching compassion means. It isn't pity that says, "Gee, that's too bad, wish I could help but I can't be bothered right now." It isn't even empathy that says, "Here's a handout that I know won't solve your problem, but it will help me feel better about myself."

Gut-wrenching compassion means letting ourselves be touched, so that we can be Christ's healing touch in the world. May it be so.

HYMN 145 The king of love my shepherd is

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwqahDvURsQ>

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

Generous One, help us to offer what we can, when we can; to know when we can share with resources, and to know when we can share with love. May what we bring be offered to build up our constantly changing ministry, as we travel as a church in the everyday world.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (Roz Denniss)

Attitude

The other day, before COVID restrictions, I was in Woollies battling with a plastic bag in order to open it and, (as usual) became quite frustrated and annoyed - I finally opened the bag and filled it with beans and was ready to move on.

My attention was caught by a crippled man sitting in a disability scooter- he was having GREAT DIFFICULTY opening his plastic bag - so I asked him would he like me to help him.

He said "no thank you" and then smiled "this is good practice for me !"

What a challenge to my attitude towards opening plastic bags! I— it reminded me of a quotation my mother often used.:- “ I complained because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet”

I have found some verses of scripture relating to our attitude to ANXIETY....mostly from the Book of Psalms and the Gospel of Matthew.

Don't be anxious about tomorrow. Live one day at a time.

My future is in God's hands.

Lord, lead me, as you promised me — tell me clearly what to do — which way to turn.

Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him to help you do it and he will.

Because the Lord is my shepherd I have everything I need! He lets me rest in the meadow grass and leads me beside the quiet streams

He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence Him. For He knows we are but dust.

Don't worry at all about having enough food and clothing. Your Heavenly Father already knows perfectly well that you need them.

Let God have all your worries and cares, for he is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you.

Let us pray.

Lord, as Covid gets closer to our door we realise how much we don't know about the rules.

Some of our own members are in Lockdown and separated from their love ones and are lonely and frustrated as they enter another two weeks or more.

So this helps us to understand and empathise with all Sydney Siders who are suffering the same separation from normal life, their families and love ones Some of our Church Members who are in lockdown are unable to visit or celebrate birthdays, weddings and funerals in traditional ways.

Essential workers are exempt from rules but nobody really knows what the term essential workers really means leading to much confusion.

Then there is confusion over vaccination — some rushing to have the “jab” but having to wait — some being afraid of side effects and refusing to have the “jab”.

There are people feeling responsible for their behaviour while others are being irresponsible and risking the health and lively -hood of others through their own selfishness.

Some people have given in to despair and depression or anger.

We see angry demonstrations against World Leaders blaming them for the reign of COVID — we see World sickness & death —with their rates still rising out of control in many countries.

We join together sincerely pleading with You, our God ,and Father to help humanity as we dash here and there in confused fear, horror and incompetence.

Please help us to be strong in our faith — give us strength and support and wisdom in this time of turmoil and anxiety.

We thank you that you are with us —that we have all we need and more — that we have the certainty of your love as we go about life in uncertain times.

Let us pray Christ’s Prayer which he prayed in uncertain times.

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

HYMN 588 In heavenly love abiding

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXc04P8d654>

BENEDICTION

God of the ancient, the now and the future
continues to journey with us.

As God's children, let us enjoy this journey together!

Let us be open to the healing of each other and of the earth,

For we are the hands and feet of God in this place.

Let us also withdraw for time alone with God

And be honest with what we need.

God grow in you deeper understanding.

Spirit grow in you richer listening to and seeing of those in need.

Jesus grow in you greater skills to minister to all whom you meet.

Go in peace to love and serve our God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhiG-Vj8CGU>