

Trinity 7 Zoom Mark 6.10-34, 53-56

I am sure we have all experienced the situation where we are settling down for a bit of quiet relaxation, perhaps a quiet evening in front of the TV or curling up with a book. Then the phone rings or the doorbell goes and there is someone with a problem who needs help, and our calm is disturbed as we do what we can to help them.

Today's Gospel is strange because it leaves out, in the middle, 18 verses which cover the feeding of the five thousand and Jesus walking on the water! It is in fact about two boat trips; one where Jesus takes the disciples off to a quiet place to rest after they had completed the mission on which he had sent them. They are followed by a great crowd who rush round to the place they are going to and they get no peace. We are told in v34 that Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began to teach them and when he saw that it was late and that they were hungry he fed them in the miracle of the Feeding of the 5000.

The other is after feeding the five thousand when Jesus sends the disciples on ahead of him in the boat to the other side of the lake. When eventually they arrive after trials and tribulations, they do not find peace and quiet because Jesus is recognised by the people there, at Gennesaret, who rush around the whole region bringing the sick to him for healing. This happened wherever he went. Mark tells us that they begged him that they might touch just the fringe of his cloak, and all who did touch it were healed. There was no rest for Jesus or his disciples.

In our ministry, be it as lay members of the church or as ordained clergy, we often have calls upon our time that may conflict with things we want to do, or with our rest times. I've known parish priests who have always been on call and turned out in the middle of the night to minister to a dying parishioner; priests who have given up days off in order to help people. Lay people as well, who have gone out of their way to help others who are in need. It is I believe our calling to do so. Living the Christian life is sacrificial- we are called to put others first as did our Lord.

We are in a position now where we see restrictions being lifted with the hope that life will return to some sort of normality in the near future. What that is we do not know and there is great uncertainty. At the time of writing this we do not know what the guidance for our worship in church will be. But we do know that, in the face of rising COVID cases albeit with much lower hospitalisation and death rates, we must proceed with great caution and that means that there will be many who are vulnerable and anxious who will need our help and care.

At the same time we do need to ensure that we do not overstretch ourselves and do have relaxation and leisure in our lives, that we eat properly and look after ourselves. It is important that we respect the welfare of others and do not pile too much on their shoulders, that we respect peoples space and leisure time. So let us pray that we may have the wisdom to discern where we can help each other and those around us, putting them first, as we move into a time of greater freedom but also great uncertainty with caution.

AMEN