

Sunday 2nd August – Trinity 8

Reflection: Matthew 14:13-21

The miracle of the loaves and the fishes is one we all know well, and the fact that it appears in all four gospels tells us that it is a very important one. In Matthew's telling of the story, which we read today, we hear that the story begins with Jesus heading off in a boat to a deserted place. But that the crowds follow him on foot and that is what leads to the miracle taking place.



Once again, we will have all heard very good and sensible sermons and homilies about how Jesus often needed that time away from others to be with the Father in prayer, and our own need for this as well. But what I find interesting is the timing of this in the gospel. The beginning of Matthew 14 is the awful account of the beheading of John the Baptist, and our passage today begins with the phrase “Now when Jesus heard about this, he withdrew from there...” It is after hearing about what happened to John that Jesus realises his need to go away to a deserted place. Was this because as someone closely associated with John it was a good idea for him to not be around? Was it simply for prayer? Was it a bit of both? The reality is that we are not told. What we do know however is that when Jesus does go away to be by himself, the people still search for him, and as a result of this that wonderful miracle of great blessing takes place. So the overall narrative goes something like this – a stressful situation, Jesus spends time away from others, great blessings occur.

As we all know, we find ourselves having lived through a very stressful situation in the current pandemic which has caused all kinds of anxieties and fears. Even though because of the lockdown restrictions we perhaps weren't rushing around as much as we were previously, the emotional toll has perhaps not been realised yet. As we enter this month of August, a time which is traditionally much quieter both in the life of the church and in the wider world, we have been urged to take things a little easier. And so I'd like to encourage all of us to have a good break during August, whether that be from work, things we do to help in the church, or any other things which cause us to be busy.

In the life of the church it is our hope that, provided we continue to move in a positive direction with tackling coronavirus, we will start to open up more of our ministry and activities that we would normally do during the week from the Autumn, so that those many good things which we do which bless others can start again.

The patterns of our gospel reading today then gives us a timely message – we have been through a situation causing us great stress, and we hope that soon we can start to offer more and more blessings to others, but in the meantime, in that middle bit of the storyline from our gospel today, we must remember to take some rest so that we can be renewed to serve each other with joy.

Rev'd Tom