

St Marc, Grenoble  
Sunday 6th August 2023 (Trinity 9)  
Matthew 14: 13 - 21  
Romans 9: 1 - 5  
'Compassion'

Good morning, and welcome - whether you are here in church, or joining us on Zoom. It is good to be back; and thanks so much for your prayers for Julia and our family; they are greatly appreciated.

Let's PRAY.

This morning I want to reflect on our Gospel reading, which is one many of us will know quite well, but it has some depths, which are well worth exploring.

But, first, as usual I'd really like to learn what you noticed in this morning's readings and to hear what jumped out at you today? ... Thank you.

Let's have a look at this Gospel reading: A bring and share picnic with a difference! At our bring and share events, we usually end up with far too much food; but on this occasion it seems only one young man's mother had sent him with a packed lunch; everyone had left town in such a hurry to go and see Jesus, and forgot to take food with them. This is such an amazing story, we must have a closer look at it.

But, first, we need to set the scene, or understand the context in more detail. The reading starts: 'When Jesus heard it he went away from there in a boat to a deserted spot by himself'.

**Can anyone tell me what 'it' was, that Jesus heard??**

(Yes,) Jesus had just heard that his cousin, friend and colleague – John the Baptist, had been beheaded by King Herod,

Herod held a party to celebrate his birthday; and his niece - the daughter of Herod's 'fancy woman' - his girlfriend - Herodias (actually his brother's wife) - her daughter danced - exotically - for her uncle; and in a drunken moment of appreciation, Herod promised to give her anything she wanted.

Herodias, her Mum, disliked John, because he'd spoken out against her illicit and immoral relationship with the king; so she persuaded her daughter to ask for John's head on a platter.

And, rather than look small by going back on his promise, Herod sent to the prison, and had John beheaded, and presented his head to her on a platter, as she had asked.

So John had been beheaded because of a drunken, boastful promise by King Herod. How do you think Jesus was feeling about that?? ... Angry, sad, frightened, yes! All of those are probably good descriptions. So Jesus set off in a boat, to a deserted place, to be on his own, to mourn and to pray, and possibly reflect on His own situation.

But, people saw him sailing across the lake (explain about Sea of Galilee), and a huge crowd followed him by walking around the shore of the lake.

That was the end of His peace and quiet! We're told about 5,000 men, plus women and children turned up to see Him. Can you imagine what that was like – a bigger crowd than all the people in this quartier. Probably more than 10,000 people in one place.

### **How do you think Jesus felt? Angry to have his solitude interrupted,? Overwhelmed? Wanting to run away?**

Well, in fact, we're told that when Jesus saw the large crowd, He felt sorry for them; He had compassion on them. He was overcome with pity: He healed all their sicknesses and, no doubt, spent time teaching them too.

Towards the end of the afternoon, the disciples came to Jesus and said: 'Send the people away so they can go and get some food' – this was a deserted place, there were no shops for miles, no takeaways or pizza vans.

But Jesus said "They don't need to go away, why don't YOU give them something to eat?" "Come on Jesus – how on earth can we do that?!"

If you've ever been to a big weekend festival, you'll know that they have shops, cafe's, restaurants, and all sorts of mobile fast food vans. Plus these days, of course, people would come by car, so that people can easily drive miles to the shops. But in 1C none of those options were available. Just a few hours' walk.

But, Jesus said to the disciples "YOU give them something to eat! Let me show you how to do it. - What do you have?"

"Well, there's a lad over here with a packed lunch – 5 rolls and a couple of sardines; but that's not going to go far"

"OK," said Jesus "Sit 'em down" And he looked up to heaven, gave thanks, blessed the loaves, broke them, and fed all the people! ... We're told everybody ate and was satisfied. As simple as that!

Afterwards, they collected twelve baskets of broken pieces. A very biblical number, some scholars suggest representing the twelve tribes of Israel; But, practically, it demonstrates our God always provides more than we ever need!

Amazing or what? Don't let anyone kid you – people like to try and explain it away – like all the miracles Jesus does. But, the fact is, this was a miracle!

What seems impossible to us is easy peezy, everyday stuff for God.

Our God doesn't have problems – it's we who have the problems, because we try to restrict God to our capabilities, rather than opening our hearts, our lives and our needs to Him and His miraculous provision!!

In 1 Timothy 6:17 Paul tells us; 'not to set our hope on something so uncertain as riches, but on the God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.'

Our God is an awesome God and so often we don't even begin to understand just what that means. He loves us – every one of us – desperately, and He cares for us. He will provide everything we need.

If you don't believe it, try asking Him – and, if your need and your request is serious, He will surprise you! And it may not be anything as simple as a picnic on a hillside!

He has amazed me on countless occasions.

But, the daft thing is, I still try to limit Him to my understanding, and I'm still surprised when He provides what I need!

We must be prepared to think outside our little box. - Not easy!

So, as I close today, I'd ask you to pray with me that God will blow your socks off with surprise and richly bless you. Let's be quiet for a few moments ...

If you don't know Him yet; or if you haven't experienced the wonder of His provision in your own life ... In the quiet, why don't you ask the Holy Spirit to come into your life in a whole new way, and transform it?

Start by saying sorry for the mess your life is in, and ask Him to come and help you experience the change our God brings ... silence ...

So, let's pray ....

**COME HOLY SPIRIT and bless us today, we pray in Jesus' Name, Amen**