

Worship Outline including Reflection for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity

Opening Verse of Scripture Psalm 20.8

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

Collect: Prayer for the Day

Lord God, your Son left the riches of heaven and became poor for our sake: when we prosper save us from pride, when we are needy save us from despair, that we may trust in you alone; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

First Reading: Jeremiah 23.1-6

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord. Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord. Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord.

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

Second Reading: Ephesians 2.11-22

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called 'the uncircumcision' by those who are called 'the circumcision'—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— 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. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 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. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

Gospel Reading: Mark 6.30-34, 53-56

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

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the market-places, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Reflection

'He had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.'"

In the passage from Mark this weekend we read that Jesus sees the crowd and regards them as 'sheep without a shepherd'. We are told that Jesus has compassion on the crowds. Sheep without a shepherd are obviously in danger, they can be attacked and they can get lost, they are vulnerable to predators and confused in the face of danger.

If we think about the opening chapters of the Gospel, we get an idea of why Jesus felt such a burden of responsibility towards the ordinary men and women who came to him. We have been told about what was going on in the palace of the King Herod. He was having parties, entertaining rich guests and you will remember that after watching a young girl dance he is willing to do anything including murder, killing the cousin of Jesus a good prophet called John the Baptist. The religious leaders were no better, they pretended to be holy people but all they were concerned about was their own power and positions in society. They took every opportunity to remind Jesus of God's laws and criticised him when he stepped out of line.

When Jesus entered the synagogue, he saw a man with a withered hand and the Pharisees watched him closely to see if Jesus would break the law and heal the man on the Sabbath. We are told that Jesus was angry at their hard hearts and

he healed the man. Mark tells us that Herod and the religious leaders joined together and decided early on that they must destroy Jesus.

So here the battle lines are drawn, the great and good and the religious ones, against the carpenter Jesus who was on the side of the poor, the powerless and those who had been led to believe that they were of no consequence to God. Mark contrasts the religious leaders who really couldn't care for people, because they had these hard hearts, and Jesus who we are told today looked at the ordinary people and had compassion. Jesus has compassion on the crowd. Jesus was not a soft touch for everyone, but for people in need he always had time and compassion.

When Jesus says that the people are "sheep without a shepherd" this is clearly a rebuke on the religious leaders of Jesus' day, who have failed in their shepherd role. It was because of their failure that Jesus knew a special shepherd was needed, one who cared for the sheep more than simply thinking of his own needs, and that shepherd was Jesus. These words "sheep without a shepherd" as they are written in Mark's Gospel would have reminded the people at the time of when Moses asked God to appoint someone to succeed him as leader of the people. (Numbers 27) God chose Joshua, the name means 'YHWH (God) is Salvation.' The Greek form of that name, 'Iesous', is known to us as Jesus.

This compassionate nature of God is what causes us to sing about 'a love that wilt not let me go.' This is why the illustration of a shepherd is such a good one. Looking for errant sheep is what shepherds do, they go and put themselves in danger looking for stupid sheep who don't even know they have gone astray. Jesus said "The Son of Man came to seek out and save the lost." The Shepherd searches because the sheep is lost! It is the nature of God to seek out the lost, because they are valuable to him. We need to hear this and remind ourselves that we have value; we are important to God. There are occasions when people use the expression, 'I found Jesus.' However, this is really not true. Much better to say 'Jesus found me'. If we say, 'I found Jesus' then that is ridiculous. The sheep doesn't go looking for the shepherd, because the sheep doesn't even know it is lost. Let us thank God that He looks for us when we are lost. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands that have taken holy things; may the ears which have heard your word be deaf to clamour and dispute; may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit; may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love shine with the light of hope; and may the bodies which have been fed with your body be refreshed with the fullness of your life; glory to you for ever. Amen.