

New start

19 7 15

Our text may be found in today's gospel and is Mark chapter 6 and verse 31:

'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile.'

Two weeks ago, in our gospel passage for 5th July, having been rejected by the folk of his home town of Nazareth, Jesus sends off the Twelve in pairs to prepare the way for him. Last week, we heard how news of him was spreading, even as far as the court of King Herod. We heard that Herod Antipas himself thought that Jesus was John the Baptist, risen from the dead, and we heard of how, earlier on, Herod had had John beheaded in order to keep a foolish promise to Salome. Today, the disciples have returned from their mission and it's time for downtime, for rest and recuperation, before picking up the reigns once again.

However, the proverb 'the best laid plans of mice and men gang oft awry' neatly sums up what happens: crossing the lake by boat to get to somewhere quiet, Jesus finds the crowds have followed them and his heart goes out them. **'They were like sheep without a shepherd'** so he begins to take care of them, to feed their spiritual hunger with the word of God, his teaching.

The principle enshrined in today's gospel is the need to recharge our spiritual batteries after we have exerted ourselves – exhausted ourselves. For the disciples, it was to have some time apart from busy-ness, to be quiet with Jesus. For the crowd, **'without a shepherd'**, it was to be taught many things. But for us,

one way could be, should be, coming to church and being fed by the word of God, a sense of the presence of God and through fellowship with each other before and after our service.

But how do we prepare to hear God speak to us and to feel him close to us here in His church of St Bartholomew, Dinard ? Well, let me simply focus on the first prayer we pray together in our service of Holy Communion – the Collect for purity.

We say : Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Collect for purity is meant to make us ready to worship God. It starts off with addressing God as Almighty which means he has the power to do anything which in itself does not contain a contradiction, that is to say God can't make square circles or four-sided triangles ! But immediately we have an example of what it means for God to be God, to be omnipotent, to be all-powerful: God knows us better than we know ourselves. We have a triple statement of the same: to God our hearts are open; to God, nothing about us is secret; to God, our innermost

desires are known. And even though he knows us completely, intimately, he still loves us like the father loved his prodigal son.

Then, our big ask is to be made clean. Judaism is all about ritual purity, all about being kosher, all about avoiding being trefah, unclean. And, to worship God, we should not only have washed ourselves and dressed in clean clothes before we come to church but we should be pure in heart, purified.

Well, we can't do that alone so our opening prayer asks for the Holy Spirit to be in-breathed, to be in us, to cleanse us. And confident He will, and is and does, we can then go on to do two things: to love God and to serve God. God loves us and we should return his love by loving him and that love will then inform and inspire what we do and what we say and how we act.

So, this morning, let me encourage you to reflect on the following: that we need to recharge our batteries and that one way our spiritual batteries are recharged is through worshipping God. To worship, we need to allow ourselves to be cleansed by God and, by the presence of God in us, we will have the will to do his will.

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist
St Bartholomew's, Dinard
19th July, 2015*

