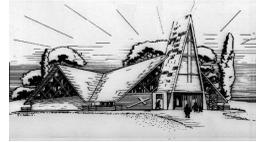




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon - 7th Sunday after Trinity

Jesus has Compassion!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mt 14, (1) 13-21:

- ^{ESV} 1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus,
- 2 and he said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him."
- 3 For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife,
- 4 because John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."
- 5 And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet.
- 6 But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod,
- 7 so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask.
- 8 Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter."
- 9 And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given.
- 10 He sent and had John beheaded in the prison,
- 11 and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother.
- 12 And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus.
- **13** Now when Jesus heard this, He withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed Him on foot from the towns.
- 14 When He went ashore He saw a great crowd, and He had compassion on them and healed their sick.
- 15 Now when it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves."
- 16 But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."
- 17 They said to Him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish."
- 18 And He said, "Bring them here to me."
- 19 Then He ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.
- 20 And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over.
- 21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.
- *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, give us ears that can hear the risen and ascended Lord and feed us with Your bread from heaven. Amen.*

• **Dear Congregation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!**

- Two meals with guests, two kings as hosts and their servants and two kingdoms. Two

very, very different meals. If we consider the food, the lamb chops, caviare and tables loaded with rich deserts you would most likely have found at king Herod's table. At Jesus' meal only the very basics: fish and bread, food of the poor.

• Let us compare the venues and occasion's: King Herod's feast in the palace, in the company of the country's elite! It was the king's birthday. It was all about him. One can picture him all relaxed, well rested enjoying himself.

• At the meal of Jesus we hear: Jesus wanted to be alone. He must have been tired. The message of the murdered cousin John was disturbing. Just a moment alone. But the crowds were tracking Him down. They were hungry for more. They came to be healed.

• What about entertainment at king Herod's feast: The daughter of Herodias, his unlawful wife - John the Baptist had lifted his finger at this sin- the daughter was dancing before him. His eyes loved what he saw and his desires drove him to make an enthusiastic promise to her: Whatever you ask I will do for you! What a display of power! Boasting!

• What entertainment do we find at the meal of Jesus? No entertainment as such but the sick were healed. The miracle itself was not that obvious at first. Jesus didn't make 2000 loafs of bread and stacked them high up to feed 5000 plus. You could not see the mountain of bread. That would have been wowed by the crowd. No. We see a strange thing: It is as if nobody even noticed what was happening. The fish and the bread simply never ran out.

• The only evidence of the miracle: 12 baskets full of leftovers- more than they had in the beginning. And, all were satisfied, all 5000 plus. Amazing: No entertainment, only bread and fish, and Jesus healing them, in the dessert- and they were all satisfied.

• How different things turned out at the other party. Ugly, to say the least. There seemed to be everything that man desires, food, women and song. And yet what strange food platter was served that night- John the Baptist's head on a plate. Why? Because the king of the kingdom of self-upliftment wanted to save himself from embarrassment and loss of power.

• Not love but hatred governed this party. Is it so different in our times? How many parties of the world end with jealousy, hatred and even murder!

• On the other hand, the meal Jesus provides is very basic as far as the elements are concerned. However, there is an ingredient in His meal which you won't find elsewhere in this world: Jesus had compassion for the people! His heart, His inner most being, went out to them. He saw them as only He can see man, namely as longing to be healed in body and soul. He saw their hunger for real food from heaven. He saw their hunger for

compassion!

• Now what is *compassion*? Compassion is the opposite of practical! We see this as what Jesus does is contrasted with what the disciples want to do with the many people. Let us take a deeper look at the compassion of Jesus.

• He needed rest. He wanted to be alone. His cousin was murdered, senselessly. He tried to escape the crowd. But then they came. They found Him. Now what? Sacrificing His own need Jesus helped them. He healed the sick. He tended to them although He really needed rest.

• *Compassion* means sacrificing your self because something else has come up, whether that means sacrificing time, or money, or energy, or sleep, or whatever else you were really hoping to have or get done today. To help a family member, a neighbour, or even a stranger. That's why compassion is so hard and increasingly rare in our world today. We tend to engage ourselves in so many things. Every minute is basically booked.

• But then comes this person who needs help. Isn't our first reaction in such a situation to try and "help" the person as quickly as possible and then to send them off. 'Shoe, back on track!' Find out what they need, try and give it to them and off they go! That is the practical way to do it.

• The disciples of Jesus were in this same practical mode too. We hear [15]: *"Now when it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves."*

• 'Jesus, enough is enough, you have to consider yourself, it is getting late. Do the practical thing for there is no food in this desolate place. You have already healed them. Surely that is enough.' And we could add, 'Jesus, these people didn't even come to You to listen to You, they just wanted to be healed.'

• But Jesus answers with a real stunner for His disciples: *"They need not go away; you give them something to eat."* Jesus was overstepping all limits here. He wanted to give them more than they had asked for! That is what Jesus' compassion does! And there is something more here: He invites His disciples to participate in the outpouring of His compassion: *"You give them something to eat".* Wish I could have seen their faces! The reaction that follows is so typical, isn't it?

• [17] *They said to Him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish."*

• 'We have ONLY ... so little money, so little time, so little helpers .. we have only.' They were focusing on what they didn't have. Excuses. Send them away to a better place where they can find food.

• Is that you? Is that me? You have to answer that before God. I certainly find my self in there. Just listen how foolish this sounds: *"This is a desolate place."*, the disciples said. Really? In the presence of Jesus- a desolate place? Will they ever get it? Do we get it? Oh, how foolish of me!

• Jesus comes to the rescue of the disciples and instead of doing the practical thing, namely to give them what they deserve and send them away, He helps them to receive His compassion and to hand it out to the crowd of 5000 plus. They first of all experience the compassion of Jesus and then they hand it to the crowd. The compassion flows through them to the crowd. Jesus' compassion makes them compassionate. And they look good!

• We see the source of all heavenly compassion: Jesus Himself. He, and only He, conveys the compassion of God the Father. It is a compassion from heaven, which you will never find in the kingdom of the world with all it's outer richness, pomp and glamour. It is a truly selfless, genuine self-sacrificing reaching out of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And you, who are a disciple, are invited to participate in this mind boggling body of compassion, which never ever is a desolate place, because Jesus, the King of Compassion is here with us.

• He takes care of our body and of our soul, of our eternal existence. To be able to do that He was willing to completely give-up Himself, to sacrifice His Body and His Blood, His whole Life, on the cursed pole. Nobody else has been there FOR YOU! That was not the practical thing to do. But, that act of Jesus, hanging on the cross for you and for me, for all, reveals the ultimate compassion, which goes far beyond our comprehension! And this compassion creates compassion in us. And so Jesus invites you, yes compassionately commands all of us who hear Him to give hungry people, in body and soul, something to eat. He supplies what is needed to be handed out. So, when someone comes to you or many come to us, as church, show compassion to them as Jesus gives His compassion to us.

• Praise and thanks to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. (2 Cor 13, 14).

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