

A Reflection from Leisa on the reading - Isaiah 55.1-5 Matthew 14.13-21

Listening and learning: Echoes of our journey, crowds, compassion, and change.

The Isaiah and Matthew passages both speak of God's people needing provision in the wilderness. In both there is a stirring of liberation, of a coming together of the people for the journey on which God will take them. Both stories talk of God's people being freely equipped to meet the needs of those around them. Matthew's account of the feeding of 5,000 begins with Jesus withdrawing on the news of John's death. The crowds follow him, and Jesus reminds the disciples that they are part of the answer to what they see as a problem. 'You give them something to eat', He says. The disciples sense that Jesus is himself broken by the news of his cousin's death but they listen and learn that bread will be broken for us all – we have a foretaste of the gathered eucharistic feast, which so many of us have longed for, during our time of social distancing.

In the weeks of lockdown, across Freshwater, Yarmouth and Totland Bay, we have gathered our skills, our time, and our resources. We have provided for the needs of those who live in our communities. We have all played our part and have responded to the call; to have compassion on those gathered around us, our friends, strangers - our neighbours. We have heard the cry of those who have lost loved ones, we have cared and responded, in the light of devastating news. This has been a gathered response, even though we have not been able to gather, in churches and community places, in traditional ways. We have communicated in a variety of ways and tried to keep, as many as possible connected – we haven't got it right for everyone – we are learning and listening, through the uncertainty of the next wave of change.

As we return to gather for some services of public worship, we are invited to continue to play our part, in the learning and listening of these first steps back into our churches. Some folks will be happy to come together, socially distanced in church, wearing a mask, taking communion in one kind – listening to the echoes of songs that we used to sing together. Others will be longing for a return to all that they once had and will find the transition to a new normal, difficult, disturbing - or will simply not be ready to return. Some will need or will choose to stay connected to God, in their homes. We will need to listen, learn, and respond to a variety of needs, with compassion, with prayerful discernment and with practical wisdom. All we once held dear will be tested in the times to come. But there is a space, a pause in between what we have known and what we will come to know. A space, in our wilderness of loss and longing, where we can pray, settle the expectations of our hearts and minds and take stock of what God has already provided. And remind ourselves that we have a King, who will generously provide for all who look to him for guidance, who place all their hopes in to his hands – so that we can all feast, together in the celebration of his Kingdom and find our place, in the gathered church and community that is with us today and is yet to come.

Rev. Leisa Potter 16.08.20 for the 10th Sunday after Trinity