

To Recognise Jesus – and the Choice

*You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth.*

Seventh Sunday after Trinity 2015

Collect:

LORD of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things; Graft in our hearts the love of thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Epistle is written in the sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans beginning at the 19th verse.

Romans 6: 19-end

¹⁹I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

²⁰When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

²¹So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death.

²²But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life.

²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Here ended the Epistle

The Holy Gospel is written in the 6th chapter of St Mark beginning at the 30th verse.

Glory be to You O Lord

Mark 6: 30-34, 53-end

Feeding the Five Thousand

³⁰*The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.*

³¹*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.*

³²*And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.*

³³*Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.*

³⁴*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.*

"... then he divided the five loaves and the two fish among them all ... the number of men who had eaten was five thousand."

Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowd..

Healing the Sick in Gannesaret

⁵³ *When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gannesaret and moored the boat.*

⁵⁴ *When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him,*

⁵⁵ *and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.*

⁵⁶ *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.*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you O Christ

Laura, Mark

Kathryn, Alex

Toby, Ben, Chad

George, Grace, Hannah

Elli, David, Becky

Francesca, Sophie

Ben, Claire, Sam

Sam, Becky

Matt, Laura

Sarah, Emily

Nicole

Bryony, Naomi, Francesca

Harvey

Daniel, Rebecca, Amy

Daniel, Thea, Eve

James, Peter

Josh, David

James

Charlie, Daniel, Andrew

Sam, Zoe, Harriet

The list simply goes on-and-on ...

Lucy, Rachel, Sarah and Peter

.... or maybe Nicola, Hannah and Jessica

.... John and Kate

.... Ben

.... Hope – Ruben, Florence [*and on-and-on they go*]

.... some of those names you may recognise

.... some may even make you smile

.... bring joy to the heart

.... a tear to the eye

On Children

And the Prophet said this of Children [Kahlil Gibran];

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

*They come through you - but not from you,
And though they are with you - yet they belong not to you.*

*You may give them your love - but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies - but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them,
but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.*

*You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,
and He bends you with His might
that His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,
so He loves also the bow that is stable.*

Is it not that **generosity** and **parenthood** go hand-in-hand;

.... you bring your child into the world
.... and they quickly become a gift to the world as they grow away
from you
.... and you can do nothing to stop them.

And that same **generosity** is at the very heart of God, father and
mother to us all,
the one who formed us out of love
and allows us to walk on in our own ways

Pause

It doesn't seem all that long ago
when Daniel – Thea and Naomi
would sit here alongside us and *[and they'll kill me for saying
this]* but their feet were nowhere near touching the floor!

But things are different now

Next week the three of them set off as young independent
travellers;

.... *watch out Mexico –*
.... *they're on the way ...*

And knowing that reminds me that
at the heart of the Christian Gospel is this idea of letting go
.... not holding on to things
.... and moving on from this place to the next

And today's reading actually adds to that same ideal
because it has so much to say about;

.... *[about]* recognition and personal choice

.... recognising Jesus for who he was *[and is]*
.... and choosing to follow him
.... *[or not to follow]*

Shift;

All those people Jesus encountered
were given absolute [*and unequivocal*] freedom to choose....

From the very beginning of his ministry to his very last breath
.... that was his way;

hanging there with him on the cross -
.... the thieves on either side
were allowed to choose;

It was their choice to know him in person [*and to believe in him*]
or their choice not to know;

.... and one turned to him in recognition
.... and the other chose to curse him

.... which leads us to ponder [*this morning*] the response of
those 5,000 souls in that lakeside encounter

(Move)

One day; [*one morning*]

³² *they went away in the boat to a deserted place by
themselves.*

³³ *Now many saw them going and **recognised** them,
and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and*

arrived ahead of them.

³⁴ *As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them*

.... and he taught them many things.

.... and then [and then]

seeing the crowd growing more hungry by the hour;

“... he divided just five loaves and the two fish among them all ... the number of men who ate was five thousand.”

Shift;

Now some might say this was nothing more than some
inconsequential miracle

Others might tell us Jesus had merely cajoled the crowd to dig
deeper into their backpacks –

.... I think not

I think not because what the 5,000 had been part of *[that day]*
was nothing short of ***miraculous!!***

That day Jesus sublimely – ***[magnificently]***
revealed his divine identity –
precisely as it had been foretold by *Ezekiel [34:11-16]*

all those years ago

Let's just remind ourselves of some of what Ezekiel said;

¹¹ *For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out.*

¹² *As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness*

¹³ *I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land*

¹⁶ *I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak*

Move;

That prophecy had been handed down from one Jewish generation to the next [*and to the next*] for over 500 years

.... it'd become [*as it were*] ingrained in the Jewish psyche

So you would imagine

given this breath-taking [*glorious*] self-disclosure [*on the part of Jesus*]

it might have knocked the socks off any self-respecting Jew

.... they would – hear
.... they would – see
.... they would – recognise
.... and they would understand

but instead - something quiet strange happens

and the scene cut's to Jesus literally bundling his friends into the boat;

".... to get to the other side of the lake!"

And we must ask ourselves – *what's that all about?*
[what exactly is going on here?]

Shift;

Well let's *[briefly]* put ourselves in the crowd's situation and circumstance....

They'd just witnessed – this miracle – *[this feeding of so many with so little]* - and the bottom line is –

the crowd had neither recognised the significance of what Jesus had been teaching nor made the connection with the prophet Ezekiel

Shift;

It might be worth pointing out *[here]* that;
we beef on about the problems in our own society
but the Jews could teach us a thing *[or two]* about living in
difficult times;

For a start they lived under the oppressive regime of Roman
occupation –

and if we remember what Acts 37 tells us about Galilee – it's is
where;

*“an infamous uprising took place in Galilee led by a man
named Judas” –*

so it's fair to say Galilee must have been something of a
nationalistic hotbed

And if you link that with a bunch of Galileans pumped up that day
with this appearance

[this appearance] of some new charismatic leader within
their midst;

.... then it doesn't take much for us to imagine a
a spoil with the oppressor could be in the offing

.... and if we can see that as a possibility
then I'm sure Jesus would be already one step ahead of us

Maybe that's why John (in chapter 6: 15) explicitly tells us that the
crowds intended to make Jesus King.

We also keep in mind - the gospels are full of fickle – volatile –
untrustworthy crowds –
one minute shouting *hosanna* –
and the next shouting *crucify him!*

.... put these thoughts together

(Move)

[put these thoughts together] then I suggest
it reason enough for
Jesus to make a diplomatic *[if not sharp]* exit

and maybe it's time for us
to take a step back from this famous story
and reflect *[perhaps]* on the much broader theme running
throughout Marks account.

This chapter is about recognition and understanding *[who Jesus really is]* – remember right at the very beginning (in verses 14 – 16):

We have all these people speculating that he might be John the Baptist – raised from the dead –
or he might be Elijah –
or a prophet –

.... and every one of them ends up backing the wrong horse

When Mark says:

“as soon as they get out of the boat – people recognised Jesus.”

the obvious question must be

....But who did they recognise?

“...[and for that matter] who do we recognise in Christ”

Let me just put it this way: –

If you were in that crowd when Jesus landed his boat at Gannesaret
how would you chose to see him;

.... would you see him as some miraculous healer

.... would you have gone to Jesus simply with your dodgy knee –

.... or to get your bad back sorted?

Pause

Or would you have gone to him in **recognition** that he is our
Lord and Saviour

.... would you **chose** to go to him with your sins –
and with your guilt and your lostness –
looking for salvation.

Mark didn't attempt to answer that one

and when the chips are down none of us can *[hand on heart]*
can claim what we might say *[and recognise and chose]* today
is what we will necessarily do tomorrow
life isn't like that

So I return to again to the words from the prophet;

*The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,
and He bends you with His might
that His arrows may go swift and far.*

*Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,
so He loves also the bow that is stable*

only;

[only] the question we *[and all parents]* inevitably ask of ourselves;

.... how well did we fashion our precious arrows?

.... how strong and stable the bow?

I started off this morning by mentioning just some of the young
people who've made their way through these doors

Over the years we've tried hard to give them *[as best we can]*
as rounded a church experience as possible along with
[along with] a half decent grounding in the Christian faith

Like all parents I guess we can claim more failures than successes

but at least we've tried our best to share and nurture them in the
way of the gospel message
and God asks no more of us

.... at the end of the day we hope *[and we pray]*
they've come to know and to **recognise** Jesus for
[for] who he is and **all he stands for**

and in the future they might even make some positive
contribution for good in this difficult and broken world

*.... and one day they will come to **give Glory to God***

So let me indulge in one more image to send you on your way;

On Easter Sunday this year
the place I normally stand to lead worship *[at 10.30]* was taken
over by a crowd of young familiar faces that brought joy to our
hearts and tears to the eye

Our children of yesterday had returned from whence they came

On the cusp of adulthood and with the whole world at their feet
and already they are doing good in lots of ways

.... and they **chose** to return to this place as one family in Christ

And they came in **recognition** that **Christ had Risen**
and together we made the most glorious music

and together we ***gave Glory to God***

and it doesn't get any better than that!!!!!!

And if that question still lingers;

.... well how well did we fashion our precious arrows?

.... how strong and stable the bow?

No matter;

.... from whence the arrow flies

is from

[is from] the loving – generous – compassionate archer's hands

And may the archer pour out his infinite blessings on all of
use and especially;

Daniel – Thea and Naomi

In the name of the Father – Son and Holy Spirit

Amen