

**St Peter's Anglican Church, Bundoora**  
**Proper 13 – 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Sunday 06/08/2023**

**Readings: Genesis 32 22-31 / P's 17 1-7,15 / Romans 9 1-8 /**

**Matthew 14 13-21**

(Readings are from New International Version)

**Sermon Theme: *Just In Case.***

By Rev'd Stephen Monsieigneur

**Genesis 32 22-31**

*Jacob Wrestles with God*

<sup>22</sup> That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. <sup>23</sup> After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. <sup>24</sup> So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. <sup>25</sup> When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. <sup>26</sup> Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

<sup>27</sup> The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

<sup>28</sup> Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

<sup>29</sup> Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

<sup>30</sup> So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

<sup>31</sup> The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. <sup>32</sup> Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.

**Psalms 17 1-7,15**

*A prayer of David.*

<sup>1</sup> Hear me, Lord, my plea is just;  
listen to my cry.

Hear my prayer—  
it does not rise from deceitful lips.

<sup>2</sup> Let my vindication come from you;  
may your eyes see what is right.

<sup>3</sup> Though you probe my heart,  
though you examine me at night and test me,  
you will find that I have planned no evil;  
my mouth has not transgressed.

<sup>4</sup> Though people tried to bribe me,  
I have kept myself from the ways of the violent  
through what your lips have commanded.

<sup>5</sup> My steps have held to your paths;  
my feet have not stumbled.

<sup>6</sup> I call on you, my God, for you will answer me;  
turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.

<sup>7</sup> Show me the wonders of your great love,  
you who save by your right hand  
those who take refuge in you from their foes.

<sup>15</sup> As for me, I will be vindicated and will see your face;  
when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.

## Romans 9 1-8

### *Paul's Anguish Over Israel*

**9** I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—<sup>2</sup> I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, <sup>4</sup> the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. <sup>5</sup> Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

### *God's Sovereign Choice*

<sup>6</sup> It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. <sup>7</sup> Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." <sup>8</sup> In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.

## Matthew 14 13-21

### *Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand*

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup> When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

<sup>15</sup> As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

<sup>16</sup> Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

<sup>17</sup> "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

<sup>18</sup> "Bring them here to me," he said. <sup>19</sup> And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. <sup>20</sup> They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. <sup>21</sup> The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

## SERMON

Just in case.

May of this year marked a significant anniversary in my life. It was twelve months since I relinquished my registration as a nurse. For nearly 35 years I was a Registered Nurse. It was my career, part of my very identity, now it had been gone for 12 months.

After being ordained in 2017 I chose to retain my registration and continue working casually as a nurse. When asked about the balancing of the demands, I rationalised my nursing with my role as a priest as being an extension of ministry. But in hindsight it was more about me maintaining a safety net or fall-back option.

In 2021 -ironically also May- I was in a serious car accident. As a result of injuries, I was no longer able to safely work in nursing. It took another year before I realised that maintaining my registration was not about doing God's work but rather my need to feel secure.

We are often called as were the disciples in today's gospel passage to trust God's providence, but, Do we truly believe Jesus when he says that God supplies all that we need? What if God's plan does not line up with our aspirations? What if in being called and agreeing to serve we are also asked to sacrifice our food, our home our security? These are difficult and deliberate questions. I am not telling you what the answer is, however living in Bundoora, Victoria, Australia, we live a life of material and secure privilege shared by less than 10% of the world's population. That itself is not wrong, we are not being judged by the context in which we live, but it is something we must consider when we reflect of this passage. Each of us has more in some way than others, be it material blessings or personal talents or spiritual gifts. Each of us is called to specific tasks as part of the body of Christ.

So too the passage; Jesus has been travelling for some time teaching and has earned a large following by this stage in his ministry. Today's crowd number at least 5000 counting only men, so it was many more with women and children also included. He has been working hard. Then he learns of John the Baptist's death and responds by withdrawing from the crowds. It is very easy for us in a post Easter relationship with God to forget the humanity of Jesus. As human, Jesus most likely is grieving, he is likely tired and struggling to focus on needs outside his own torment. The man Jesus needed time to process, to pray, to regather his strength. But the crowd do not respect Jesus' need for privacy, they follow hungering for more from Jesus.

The want for security is as old as life itself and essential if as a species we are to thrive, but have you ever been truly hungry? Desperate for a meal. Being hungry reduces our functional capability. Our concentration and decision making are impaired. We are easily distracted and more prone to making mistakes. We struggle to learn we may even become irrational. Hunger occurs when food security is lost and the continuity of life is threatened.

Jesus understands this when sympathetic to the need of the crowd, and with only a little time for prayer is back caring, healing. His disciples aware of how he must be feeling try to give him rest by recommending he send the crowd away to find food, but Jesus tells his disciples to feed the crowd with what they have. We know their response, and I ask you, who here seriously thinks 5 loaves and 2 fish are enough to feed a crowd of over 5000 people? In asking what he did, Jesus was in the minds of the disciples putting at risk their food security. Why would Jesus give such a ridiculous instruction?

Shortly we are going to celebrate the eucharist, and in this lies the lesson. Upon receiving the loaves and fish, Jesus blesses them breaks them and shares them, all are fed and there are even leftovers. In the eucharist we are experiencing what this crowd in Galilee experienced. As the gifts of bread and wine are offered, I as priest on behalf of all present, say prayers, including the words of institution, over them. Through the eucharistic mystery the element become the body and blood of Christ. They become far more than what they appear, instead of being sustenance for our body, they become the food that feeds our spirit.

We are reminded that God can take whatever we have whatever our talent, whether it is a lot or a little and do great with it. There is a catch, we must be willing to offer it to God. God may in any manner of way call us but God will never force us. It must be our choice to give whatever to God and trust that God will provide whatever else is required.

Most of us if given a choice will save what we have for a rainy day, just in case we need, and nothing is available. God is telling us to trust that whatever we truly need when we need it will be available. The disciples were holding on to the loaves and fish just in case, but they trusted Jesus, and the crowd was fed.

We are all being called to trust Jesus who trusted the father.

I trusted God and by letting go of my nurse's registration and I discovered God's grace through the joy of being more available and present to fill God's calling of me to priestly ministry. Also, life became simpler as I was no longer required to meet the criteria to maintain practice as a nurse.

Of course, the lives of the disciples, the prophets and saints demonstrate that our relationships with God through Jesus are not one dimensional, that there will be many times God calls each of us throughout our lives to give to others. Jacob struggled with the challenges of life and relationship with God. Even after being blessed by God, life would hold challenges. Throughout our lives we remain a work in progress.

How has God called you to feed others?

Each one of us is called into ministry somewhere and overtime there will be many calls as our gifts fluctuate through life experiences. To hear God we just need to listen through quiet time with God, the

observations of others who witness our comings and goings. I find the following questions useful as I reflect on my calling.

- What are you holding on to for that rainy day?
- What is the thing that you would feel insecure or lost without?

The challenge,

- Are you willing if called to offer whatever gives you a sense of security to God trusting your needs will be taken care of?

I hope you said yes, because this is the cost of doing Gods will.

AMEN