**St James Bolton – Sunday 18th July – Jenny Medley**

**Mark 6:30-34,53-56**

A lot happens in chapter 6 of the Gospel of St Mark, A lot of dramatic events. Jesus is rejected in his hometown, he sends out the twelve disciples on a mission, John the Baptist is killed, Jesus feeds the five thousand and walks on water. All dramatic events in Marks story of Jesus’ ministry all in chapter 6. So today’s readings seem tame in comparison but these few verses that fit between the dramatic events have a lot to teach us,

And I’ve put them under three headings

**1.Come away to a quiet place**

**2. compassion**

**3. Cloak touching**

 The disciples have returned from their mission they are excited as they recount their experiences to Jesus, but there are so many people around, so many demands on Jesus’ time, so much noise that Jesus has compassion for his disciples and suggest they go away to a quiet spot to get some rest.

Oh doesn’t that sound good, to get away to a quiet spot. I don’t know about you but I haven’t left my home overnight for over 12 months, I long for a change of scenes, a sight of the sea, a holiday from everyday chores where you can relax and become refreshed The Pandemic and lockdown has stopped us travelling great distances but we all still need to get away from the pressures of life for our mental wellbeing. and it was the same 2000 years ago. Jesus was concerned for his disciples so he said “come with me to a quiet place and get some rest so they set off by themselves in a boat

They set off to find some peace and quiet, but the crowds saw them going and followed on foot gathering more people as they went until when Jesus and the disciples landed again they found a large crowd waiting for them.

Does that mean Jesus’ plan to take the disciples away to a quiet spot had failed, I don’t think so. we naturally think the boat trip was to get to the quiet place but actually the boat trip was the quiet place. Jesus was becoming so famous so well known that the only place where he could be alone with his disciples was in the middle of the sea of Galilee . again nothing changes, the problems of being a celebrity. The journey in the boat was the time Jesus gave his disciples to rest from their ministry, to be alone with him, to talk and find nourishment. And Jesus gives us the same invitation. If life is getting too much for you, if you need rest and refreshment come to this quiet spot and get some peace and nourishment. If you look up at the architecture of the roof, you can see that its shaped like a … boat. That isn’t an accident a lot of churches look the same. This space, this church building is a visible reminder that Jesus invites you and me to come away with him to find rest for our souls. This is a place where we can come away to rest a while, find nourishment and know that Jesus is here with us. Many people have testified that they have found St James church a friendly, open community where people feel safe and near to God. . Here is where he teaches us how to be his disciples, here is where he nourishes us with his word here is where we learn to live in community with our church family. Jesus invests in our lives by inviting us into his life. When Jesus taught his followers to preach repentance and offer healing and wholeness, he was inviting those apostles into partnership with him, He is still inviting us to work in partnership with him so that his ministry can expand, and we can only do that by taking Jesus with us, out into the world

**Show compassion**

Verse 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.”*

Jesus shows a lot of compassion in Mark’s, gospel but I think our understanding of that word “compassion” has changed since Mark wrote his gospel. The dictionary defines compassion as “pity inclining one to help or be merciful” but to me pity almost always carries with it the assumption that a person who receives our pity is somehow less significant, less important than we are. We see ourselves as better than those we see as pitiful. Even when we define compassion as empathy, there is still that feeling that we are somehow above or separate from the one with whom we empathize. When we talk about walking a mile in another’s shoes, we assume that those shoes are not as comfortable or attractive or as sturdy as our own shoes. When we empathize with someone else, it is clear that these are not *our* feelings. We only experience them temporarily. They still belong to the other person.

But compassion really means *suffering with* the one who suffers. The Greek verb for having compassion – *splagchnitzomai* – (which I can’t pronounce) includes the root word for intestines. Compassion is something that you feel in your gut. Compassion is what bubbles up in us when we see someone else experiencing a pain we have experienced and know all too well. We know that pain in the very core of our being.

* This is the kind of compassion a parent feels when their child falls over and scrapes their knees.
* Compassion is what someone who has been the victim of bullying feels when they see someone else being bullied.
* Compassion is the pain of watching a friend go through a messy divorce when you’ve been there and done that.
* It’s the pain of watching a parent diminish with age, as you become the care*giver* for the person who always took care of you.

Its that stomach twisting, gut wrenching feeling that we have experienced before and because of this we can show compassion to others because we know what they are experiencing

When Jesus looked on these crowds of people who had chased him around the lake, he felt their pain, their confusion, their deep desire to know God in a way their scribes and teachers had never shown them. He felt their need to know God’s love for them. He suffered as they suffered, in the very core of his being.

When Jesus looks at you and me, he has compassion for us, too. He feels our pain, our sorrow, our frustration, and our worry. He suffers with us in our broken relationships, our need to make ends meet, and our deep desire to be right with God. He sees us running around like sheep without a shepherd, and he calls to us to come away to a quiet place and talk with him. And in that quiet place he feeds us the word of God he feeds us with knowledge and understanding, he shows himself to be the divine shepherd, the very son of God.

But every holiday must come to an end, every time of rest and relaxation finishes, we must leave the boat and go out into the world again.

*Verse 33 But many who saw Jesus leaving recognised him and ran on foot from all the towns and got there before him*.

A few months back I arranged to meet Jenni Bradley to go for a walk. We arranged to meet at the park gates at 10 o’clock. I arrived at 10 to 10, I’m always early and waited, but 10 oclock came and went and there was no Jenni. Had I mistaken the time or the place, was something wrong and she couldn’t contact me, what should I do? I decided to walk down Bolton Road to see if she was walking up, when she was not there I walked to the top gate. We had planned to walk in Undercliffe cemetery had I misunderstood and we were meeting at the cemetery gates so I went there. No Jenni, so I walked through the park, back to the main gate and then home. What I didn’t know was that when I walked down Bolton Road towards Jenni’s house, Jenni was walking through the park, when I wasn’t at the park gates, she had walked up Bolton Road towards my home, when I wasn’t at home she walked back to the park and back home. The moral of this story is to communicate better make sure you’ve got your mobile with you but also to trust your friend and wait a little longer at the appointed place

When the people saw Jesus leaving they didn’t know where he was going so they ran widely along the shore to where they thought he may land again. They tried to second-guess Jesus, running ahead to where they thought he would land. Do we do that too, do we leave the security of the boat and in our enthusiasm, second guess where Jesus wants us to go, running ahead to a destination of our choosing instead of waiting for Jesus to direct us, How often have we been wrong about the destination he had in mind for us how often have we started a project, only to find God was not there, we’d taken the wrong direction and got lost. How many times have we not trusted God to provide directions. How many times have we not waited long enough

**Cloak Touching**

Verse 53, “When they had crossed over, they landed at Genneserat and anchored there” Another boat trip, another time of rest and teaching and when they landed another crowd of needy people who recognised Jesus verse 56 “The people brought the sick to be healed and beg Jesus to let them touch the hem of his cloak and all who touched him were healed”

The news of the women healed by just touching the hem of Jesus’ cloak has spread so the people brought the sick on mats and laid them along the road where Jesus was walking and begged him to let them touch the hem of his cloak and all who touched them were healed. Today as disciples of Jesus our job is to enable our friends and family to come within touching distance of Jesus. To reach out to those who are lost or hurting to show them compassion and the love of God, to invite them into church where they can find rest and nourishment and let the Holy Spirit do the rest

God is not looking for dramatic events to build his kingdom, he knows our limitations, he knows our fears he’s looking for us to use the little things we do in our everyday life that points people to Jesus. Do you tell people you go to church, and are you ready with a response if they ask you why. Do we mention God in a good way in our conversations, so our friends can discern the difference between following Christ and being religious Can they touch Christ through knowing you. These are things we can all do what ever our age or aptitude, small things that grow the Kingdom naturally in God’s good time.

Lets make it so Amen

**This Saturday -Come join us!**

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We meet on **Mondays at 7.30pm** on Zoom to delve deeper into the bible passages. You would be very welcome to join us

On **Wednesday at 7.30pm** we have our online prayer evening, also on Zoom.

Do join us if you can.

We need your help. Imagine someone had never visited or heard of St James,Bolton. What would you tell them? Could you write a couple of sentences which we could use in our parish profile to help prospective vicars find out more about us? Please let Rachel Smith, Michelle Heseltine or Will Sutcliffe have your contributions.