

## NORTHERN BEACHES UNITING CHURCHES

Sunday 9 August 2020

Rev. John Barker – reflective sermon



*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. They all ate and were satisfied.....[Mt 14: 19-20]*

Today, we are going to explore the well-known Gospel reading today in Matthew, and have three brief reflection points about various aspects of the reading:

### REFLECTION 1 – PLACES OF SOLITUDE

The first thing we read in the gospel reading today is how Jesus received some news and “withdrew privately to a solitary place”

Story: Who has had times like that? Have you even had an incident happen that just led you to wanting to escape and get away from your circumstances and people?



**REFLECTION:** As you look at this picture this morning, where might YOU go (or do) for time to yourself? What is YOUR place of solitude?

## REFLECTION 2 – AN ALTERNATIVE REALITY

The context of our reading was intense....The local prophet, **John the Baptist, had just been executed** by Herod Antipas (verse 14: 1-12).

THIS WAS A DIFFICULT TIME, and highlighted the affliction and fear that the people were under.

In terms of Roman religion, the emperor is the god's agent for providing food for the people.

THE MESSAGE: against great odds, Jesus brought a message of .....HOPE. Jesus offers an alternative world... it's a world that stands in contrast to imperial brutality. Jesus came and preached of serving, not lording over people.

**REFLECTION:** Can we identify what (or who!) people may fear today? How might we 'hear' the voice of Jesus in that fear?



## REFLECTION 3 – A BANQUET FROM HEAVEN

THE PEOPLE liked what they saw in Jesus, they fell in love with his message, his words and actions.

The crowd just kept following, into some remote place in the middle of no-where with the sun setting, AND, no provisions or food. For Jesus followers – maybe there was something speaking to their hearts that went beyond food and provisions.

Did you notice that there is no mention of the crowd grumbling about being hungry! 'SEND THEM AWAY', say the disciples. They can look after themselves – only five loaves of bread and two fish – the disciples feel that they have no capacity to respond to the demands.

"BRING THEM HERE TO ME", says Jesus. Jesus is about to show them what resources they do have at hand. Jesus wants them to know what they have at their disposal and what they are capable of.



**REFLECTION:** Discuss the 'food' that Jesus might supply & even multiply today. How and to whom might the church ask the same question as Jesus, "Bring them here to me"?