

2 Samuel 7:1-14a

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Carry on with the healing

Introduction:

Continuing the story of David's rise from shepherd king...

Last week we heard of the tabernacle being brought into the city that would become Jerusalem this consolidating in David both religious and political power. Today we hear David's servant and prophet Nathan attempt to further bolster David's confidence as king and servant of God: "God is with you so do what you want: build God a house if that pleases you."

But, as the story is told, God, Yahweh, has something to say about this advice, Yahweh wasn't very pleased and instructs Nathan to sour his theology out and correct the advice he has just given David. "I've never lived in a house." Yahweh reminds Nathan, "What makes you think David is the one to constrain my mobility?" "Have I ever sought a cedar house – read house of splendour and opulence?". Instead the story unfolds to make it plain that is is a household of people that God desires, a huge family of decedents and friends all cared for properly and compassionately by the householder – king. *Listen for this turn of events!*

Now with fear that you will think I'm being repetitive I am daring to say again that this gospel, attributed to Mark, this prototype gospel that gathers up the core oral tradition and stories in circulation 70 years

after Jesus death is about two things: action and healing. It is about how the followers of Jesus could and should live so that the healing of the nations or salvation can be realised and the realm of God's reign, heaven come on earth.

In the main the stories are metaphorical.

For each individual healing there is a corresponding lesson being offered to us in relation to being community and responding to one another as community.

This morning our Gospel follows last week's reporting of the incident in which John the Baptist was killed seemingly at the whim of Herod's wife. But it has deep overtones that expose political power, and even deeper indicators about the behaviour of oppressed persons namely Herod's wife and daughter.

We hear this morning's gospel reading against that background... and can almost feel Jesus' need for escape and reassurance. Jesus knew what King David learned that being a servant or child of God does not give you carte blanche to do as you like!

I can only imagine that Jesus must have been devastated, and scared when he heard the news of the death of John the Baptist (that was the reading we heard last week). After all John the Baptist was his mentor, the one who baptised him into the fellowship of reformers searching for a just and nonviolent engagement with God.

The powerful court had been able to rid itself of a troublesome person ... and come out of the travesty with the leader, King Herod, seemingly

apologetic ... 'for he liked listening to John the baptiser' – it was his wife's fault!!

- No wonder Jesus wanted time out to think about the movement he was engaged in that seemed to gathering momentum and a life of its own and challenging the general population and religious leaders and politicians alike.
- No wonder the disciples were engaged in a heavy session of reassurance with Jesus, telling him what they had done following what they had been taught about healing love.
- No wonder Jesus said 'let's go away to a deserted place by our selves' – they needed time alone, away from the pressure of people and their needs, away from the fear of being trapped by political or religious leaders.

So off they went in a boat, into the middle of the lake seeking to meet the need for down time, reflection and time to reassess what was going on.

They needed to think and talk and decide together about the current situation they were in. What was their part in the growing unrest amongst the peasants and trades people?

Could they cope with the fear that was becoming evident amongst the leadership hierarchy?

Was this the way to peace with justice? Was this loving compassion? Was this the way of God's healing love? Were they reacting to their own hurts and struggles and acting out unhelpfully? Did they need, like Nathan the prophet, to rethink their theology and listen to God more carefully?

I want to offer you now, a golden opportunity to begin the process of wondering about yourselves and how you are living and engaging in the call of God for loving compassion.

- Please take an orange ... hold it in your hand and imagine the tree... be thankful
- Peel it slowly: as you peel it, with each piece you remove, be brave and name something for which you seek healing...something that you have absorbed from others, something that holds you back from open vulnerable honesty
- Now, hold the vulnerable, squishy exposed flesh in your hand and imagine how good it will taste, how thirst quenching the juice. Here is the best bit that was hidden.
- Imagine yourself, stripped of the shell you have built around yourself as you have learned to tough out life and the hurts you have absorbed from others.

Now eat, enjoy and know you can be made whole, healed and strengthened so you can be refreshment and healing for others. One thing that the story sets out for us in no uncertain terms is that there is always the need for healing. The need goes on and on, the task is never finished: we need to face our fears and uncertainties and hurts again and again; to attend to our own healing again and again, and we need to face up to and own and attend to healing in our community again and again.

We are not finished, perfect people! If you thought you were then I am sorry to disabuse you of that idea! All of us are in need of healing – sometimes more than others. It is easy to acknowledge when the

healing is physical ... we get sympathy and understanding for that. I am much friendlier toward my hand since my spiritual mentor suggested that perhaps it was encouraging me to slow down and try half pace for a while so as not to lose too quickly the benefits of being on leave. And there are aspects of ourselves that are not so easy to see, or to own that are just as much in need of understanding, compassion and healing! Someone once said first you have to face a need for healing, then own it then do something about it: own , face, act have become three challenging words for me! This is the pattern we see in Jesus to withdraw from time to time, to think and renew energy.

Currently before us is the need for healing between Maori and Pakeha over rights and responsibilities, trust and respect. Healing is required in our Church and General Synod between conservatives and liberals between women and men, between denominations, healing is required between those who choose same sex partners and those who are heterosexual. As a community there are many issues that require healing. And even if as individuals we are tired of engaging at the moment and need downtime, the need for healing goes on and others energised and empowered to engage deserve our goodwill while they carry on the healing process for us.

Compassion and healing demands we know our own vulnerabilities and predilection for constructing shells to hide in, houses to contain us safely, yet the way of Jesus asks us to be honest and with ourselves and compassionate to others, to strip away the walls that divide.