

Proper 11B – 2018 (Last Day in Tuckerton)

2 Samuel 7: 1-14a

Psalm 89: 20-37

Ephesians 2:11-22

Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56

Did you hear that phrase in the Gospel – “**sheep without a shepherd**”? You may feel that I am leaving **you** as sheep without a shepherd. I, too, feel adrift. Take heart! We are not alone!! Jesus has compassion on us and will **always be with us**. We can take great comfort and inspiration from Jesus’ response to those people around him in Mark’s Gospel:

³⁴As (Jesus) 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.

Let’s talk about that word “compassion”. The meaning of that word in the Gospel is something more than we mean in modern English. Surprisingly, Bible scholars tell us: “*In the New Testament, this word translated as*

*"compassion" is used only of Jesus and by Jesus. The English word means "**suffering with**". The Greek is much more visceral, locating the seat of compassion in the entrails. It is a gut feeling, but a gut feeling that gets things done. Jesus has compassion on the crowds, but then he teaches them, feeds them...and heal(s) them".ⁱ Jesus was a man of compassion AND action.*

Jesus always started by teaching people about the coming Kingdom, so that they would recognize what he was doing in his earthly ministry. He wanted his relationships to point directly to God's creative power, God's love, and God's plans for those who would join in the Kingdom's growth. Jesus taught before he healed and fed the crowd. There will be more things you need to learn before God completes his work in you. Jesus wanted to help the people to understand their needs as needs for

God and God's action in their lives. Jesus' compassion for the crowd in the Gospel and for us begins with drawing our attention to where the power is—with God, in God's Kingdom. Pay less attention to what you **want** and more to what God is doing and where God is leading.

This time of transition is to discern what God needs from this people, in this time, and in this place. It is a time to discern what **God wants for you**. What you all want is in the mix, too. In the Bible, Jesus meets the real physical needs for healing and, when the time comes, the needs for food. Always his question: What do you want or need? Often, Jesus asks someone directly: What do you want me to do for you?

In truth, Jesus knows our needs, and the needs of this community better than you do. In the Collect we prayed earlier, it says **God knows our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking.** It mentions **those things**

which we are afraid to ask, and it mentions those things which we need, but are unaware of...

God is God and we are not. Our lives are so complex that it sometimes is best left to God to understand what we really need. Jesus saw with gut-wrenching compassion the needs of those people on the shore in the Gospel and he immediately set about meeting those needs in the way that was best for them. Jesus will do the same for us. Keep praying and be patient. Look around to see what answers God is already sending. There are things beyond us that take an open mind and heart, combined with God's grace, to understand. Be prayerful, be watchful and be alert for God!

In my very first sermon in this space, in October 2009, I shared an action plan with you for health and wellness in times of transition. The steps were:

- 1) Show up
- 2) Pay attention
- 3) Tell the truth
- 4) Don't get too attached to a specific result

I have tried to show up, pay attention, tell the truth and prayerfully act in God's ways in my ministry here. Even in that beginning sermon, I warned you that God's work requires accepting change. I said:

"Sometimes we have to let go of what our hand is grasping now to reach out for something else. God is in the business of turning the world upside down and making all things new. In the process, what we thought was the right thing becomes the wrong thing and, conversely, just when we think we're in the middle of the world's biggest mistake, God makes it right, but usually not in any way we expected...God uses all the things of this world to bring us closer to each other and to Him in ways that we will never be

able to fully perceive.“ I believe we are now closer to God and to one another.

We belong to God. We are baptized into one family, destined for eternal life together. Russell, Autumn and Russell Jr. (Buttercup) will join us today. At baptism, we are marked with holy oil, marked with a cross, and declared “Christ’s own forever”. Remember that fact – You are Christ’s own forever. Act that way, in our real lives as brothers and sisters to Jesus and to one another. Act with that compassion that Jesus had, feeling for one another **and** responding with love, care and action. When we get to sharing the peace, I’ll ask you to share a cross as you share the love and peace of Christ with one another, and as we welcome the newly baptized.

In the nine years I have been here, the people of this church and this community have shared much love and fruitful ministry with me.

For that, I am deeply grateful to God and to you and to those who were with us and are no longer. There has also been some pain and failure here. **For my part in any personal hurt and any failure to follow the way of Jesus, I apologize and repent.** I ask your forgiveness. I hope you know that I came in love and did my best to love each of you to this end of our time together. You will be in my prayers. I believe, as God promises, that this will not be the real end of our time together. We will be together in the communion of saints eternally. Many questions will be answered then. For now, **we offer all we are, all we have, and all we will be to God- as we pray:**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for bringing us together and for your care of this church through all its years – those past and those to come. We thank you for creating us, saving us, sustaining us and giving us your

continual love and grace. We pray that you will continue grant that all of us, by drawing near to you, may always remain close to each other in the communion of saints.
AMEN

ⁱ John Pridmore

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/80256FA1003E05C1/httpPublicPages/ABD426A0F265E5EF802571AA00461174?opendocument>