

Pentecost 15A 200820S

Today is the last service I will be leading at Westmead, and it is so hard to imagine that this was where we would be when I began 5.5 years ago. There have been many things which have happened over the years which are important and will give us stories to tell for years to come.

I remember one Sunday using the image of a boat pulled up on the shore. I spoke of how we did not know what the future would hold but that we were in the boat together. It didn't really matter where we went, it was being together which mattered.



You may remember that when I first came we did not have the tv screens and it was only occasionally there would be images used on the overhead projector. Not long after I came the tv screens and the computer arrived and it wasn't long before we got used to seeing words and images up on the screen and we could even see some videos or other stories which expanded our worship.

There were times which were tough- and many times which were uncertain but together we have managed to journey together in wonderful and special ways.

There have been times when we have needed courage, and times which have been painful, and many, many times of joy and laughter.

This year has been so strange and none of thought that this would be how my time with you would finish, but this is simply the way it is. One of the most reassuring things is that the bible readings tell us that in all things and at all times God will provide.

Many years ago in the time of the exodus, the people of Israel were led by Moses out of the land of Egypt. It was not an easy journey but they travelled together on the way. There were a lot of people who travelled together, with their slaves and animals and a contingent of over a million people were on the move.

There were times when people were happy to be on the way, but over time, they started to mumble and complain and today's reading reminds us that they got hungry as well. Travelling a long journey which would have normally have taken 4 years or so, walking, ended up taking 40 years, and they did wander in the wilderness. Even still, even in the midst of the uncertainty and the mumbling and complaining, God still provided.

Each day they would receive the bread they needed, and the quail came so they had food to eat.

God provided and gave them what they needed.

The challenge is that what we need to recognise that sometimes the way that God answers prayer is not always the way that we understand. The gospel reading does not necessarily make sense, and our human desire is to want those who have worked the hardest and longest to earn the most. A look at our world sees the disproportionate amount of money some people get, and yet those who often work the longest and hardest can often end up with the smallest amount of money. Life is not fair.

Yet when we come to this parable it is less about what we might see as fair and more of a focus on the generosity of God. You see God can see the challenges faced by those who can't get work. In this time of recession there are many more people out of work than we have ever seen in Australia- and still families need to have food on the table.

I am so glad that God answers prayer and gives us what we need, even though it may not seem fair, it does show the generosity of God.

Today, as we join together in worship, we will share a meal of bread and wine. This is what God has provided us, even though it might be very different from the manna and quail which God provided so many years ago.

No matter whether we are together or apart, God will provide.

I will continue to pray for you and will always be thankful for the times we have had together. Please always remember, even when it may seem strange or when you are uncertain, the God we all follow will provide and meet you in your needs. Just not always in the way we imagine.

My prayer for you is that in all things, you may continue to grow in your faith in God and serve God and others in the name of Jesus Christ who is the one who has called us together for this part of our life's journey.

Be reassured that I will think of you always, and God is with you, this day and all days.

