

Sea Sunday

Ezek 2 v1-5 Ps 123

CCW, 8th July 2018

2Cor 12 v2-10

Mark 6 v1-13

Intro to Sea Sunday: 2nd Sunday in July has become a traditional day to remember and support those who serve us by working at sea. We will be focusing on the work of The Mission to Seafarers and how they support those who work often alone, away from their families for weeks or months at a time, in very dangerous and lonely conditions and of our attitude towards others in our fast and busy society who are also alone or feel unwelcome.

Intro prayer: Dear Jesus, help all those who are not made welcome, who feel lonely and ignored; people we know and especially today on Sea Sunday, seafarers. Help us to be kind to anyone who we see is lonely or being ignored, and strengthen all those who have a mission to seamen to welcome them when they come to the ports in our country. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In our gospel reading, we hear how Jesus is unwelcome. Can you think of a time when you felt unwelcome – a newcomer to a club or society; a work's do where you hardly know anyone; the wedding of a distant cousin - hovering on the edge when everyone else seems to be deep in meaningful conversation? Or can you recall a time when you saw someone else being excluded or ignored. It might take you back to school days, when there was a new kid to school.

Jesus was no stranger to being the outsider, the weird one, the newbie – in our gospel, it's Jesus' own town that shuns him. He is not far from us in our times of loneliness. He understands exactly how it feels. Every day our news contains stories of people who are shunned and more often, just plain ignored. Their situation is too complicated to understand and we are too busy with our lives. This is sad and not how we are meant to live – in community. Loneliness is becoming a dark hallmark of our times.

We're sometimes separated from our families for a few days at a time – and we're usually relieved when we're all back together again. But think back to how you might feel if this separation wasn't just for a few days – but for weeks or months at a time.

Ships and seafarers are extremely important to us – I doubt you could have got through to this point in the day without having to depend on seafarers in some way for your clothes, or toiletries, your food, the phone or computer you use to check up on the rest of the world, your car and fuel. Some estimates put our dependency on seafarers for our everyday 'stuff' at 95%. And these seafarers work in dangerous conditions, leaving behind their families so that we can live our lives more easily and comfortably. When they do come into port, it's still not home, some ships owners are not the most responsible employees and if it weren't for the work of Christian organisations like The Mission to Seafarers or Apostleship of the Sea, these workers could easily be ignored, shunned and unwelcome.

We were not created to be lonely – being alone for a short time is different. But loneliness is becoming a huge problem throughout our modern world. Even the internet giants now acknowledge that loneliness is an increasing problem in the modern world:

MSN UK has launched an online campaign to raise donations, awareness and volunteering efforts to help the estimated [9 million people in Britain](#) who often or always feel lonely.

Loneliness is not just a problem for the elderly. It crosses all age groups. An Office for National Statistics report says that 16 to 24-year-olds feel more lonely even than pensioners and those who are affected are more likely to self-harm or suffer from depression. One study has likened the health impact of loneliness to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. The issue is so widespread and so debilitating that the Government has appointed [MP Tracey Crouch as the first ever Minister for Loneliness](#).

So watch out for the campaigns working to combat loneliness in all strata of our communities. But today, especially, we are thinking of seafarers – the danger and loneliness they face and the support they receive, be it practical, financial or spiritual from those who preach and practice the good news of Jesus.

www.missiontoseafarers.org

https://www.apostleshiofthesea.org.uk/sites/default/files/imce/Sea%20Sunday%20booklet%202018%20reduce_0.pdf

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/other/msn-causes-help-us-tackle-loneliness-in-the-uk/ar-AAxNaNd>