

‘YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT’

Deuteronomy 26. 1-11

Philippians 4. 4-9

Mark 6. 30-44

I speak to you in the name of the † Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

When many people read the Gospels and come across a miracle, they often look no farther than the miracle itself. They read about how our Lord performed some great feat and think about wonderful it must have been to see it; but then go away without reflecting on what the miracle teaches us about Jesus and how we should put our faith in him.

So when these same people read the account that we have just heard, which tells us how Christ had compassion for people who had chased him around the Sea of Galilee, they only see the story in the context. They only think about how our Lord took a small amount bread and two fish and then fed 5,000 people. To many, this miracle – as wonderful as it is – is the beginning and end of the story.

Jesus’ miracle in that lonely place does show us the greatness of his power and that our God has a very deep love for needy souls. However, this miracle has been given to us not only so that we can know that Christ possessed great power and loved others. We learn a much more personal and profound thing from this story. Miracles are always signposts to deeper spiritual realities about the heart and nature of God.

When our Lord says to his disciples, ‘*You* give them something to eat’, everything in the story changes. Until this point, the story had been about the disciple’s return from their long and successful journeys, and about how they were unable to find rest because of the masses of people who wanted to be with them. But now the disciples,

who thought they were finally going to get that rest, are seemingly burdened with the task of how to feed a virtual army of people so late in the day. Their reply was incredulity and confusion. They say to Jesus, ‘What are we to do?’ ‘Do we go into the neighbouring towns and try to buy all this bread?’ ‘Do we really want to spend so much money on feeding all these people?’

The disciples’ questions show that they had all but forgotten what Christ had just tried to teach them. They were looking for a human answer to a divine problem. They sought a human solution of their own devising, rather than looking to depend upon God. For many days prior to the miracle, the disciples had relied on God’s power and protection to equip them to do the preaching and the working of miracles that they had performed on our Lord’s behalf. But now, even though they had returned to Jesus, the Source of God’s power, they showed how little of his teaching had actually sunk into their hearts.

Undaunted by his disciples’ weakness, Christ gives thanks for what the Father has provided. He breaks the food into pieces and then miraculously distributes so much bread and fish that the crowd ate all that they wanted. Even twelve basketfuls of food were left over – which in and of itself was many times more than the original amount.

Our God is sufficient for all things. He is able to overcome any obstacle; and nothing is too difficult for him. Our Lord, who is the Bread of Life, distributed the bread to the crowd in the same way that he would offer bread to his disciples at their last meal together, saying, ‘Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’

The 5,000 people were fed on the hillside by Jesus, and they received all of the fish and bread that they could eat. Christ’s disciples received bread from him as they

shared the Last Supper, and received food for their souls. And today, in a few moments, we will have the joy of receiving Holy Communion together, when our Lord will feed us again, this time with his own body and blood. As we receive from him this morning, let us be bold; let us not hesitate to ask him to work mightily in our lives and to equip us to do extraordinary things for him.

Amen.