

Coop's Scoops # 83 Sunday liturgy and sermon, August 2nd, 2020

“ We do not live by bread alone, but by every word that come from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4)

Readings: Exodus 2: 1-14 Psalm 143:1-10 Romans 8: 31-39

Collect: Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ fed the hungry with the bread of His life and the word of His Kingdom. Renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your true and living bread, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Mathew14:13-21

¹³ Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. ¹⁵ When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to them, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” ¹⁷ They replied, “We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.” ¹⁸ And he said, “Bring them here to me.” ¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰ And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

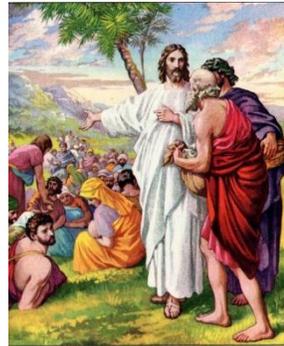
The Sermon: There is a somber and tender Lenten Hymn titled “O come and mourn with me awhile”. Some of you may remember it. But Jesus could have **written** it on the day we find Him in our Gospel this morning. He has just received horrible news. His cousin John, the one who baptized Him, the one who in prison asked Jesus for comforting words, that cousin has just been murdered. Been beheaded at the cowardly behest of Herod to save face after making a foolish promise to his dancing young step-daughter. Jesus was bereft, sad beyond measure, and no doubt highly aware that young prophets within Israel often met with untimely and violent death. In this state, Jesus withdraws from Nazareth by boat and lands in a lonely place, seeking solitude. But the crowds who’d heard His Kingdom parables followed Him by foot, racing around the lake to beat Him to His destination. By the thousands. Thousands! I remember being terribly sad about a good

friend's death, learning of it in the middle of a busy, busy parish day. I withdrew to the Rectory to have a cry and pray and think about my friend. Wasn't there ten minutes when a local grumpy and honestly quite demanding neighbourhood woman knocked on my door looking for help. My heart fell...Really, Lord? Now? I truly wanted that woman to just go away. But I made her a sandwich and gave her some milk out on the porch. I did what needed to be done, but my heart wasn't in it. I was still in grief-zone. And that was just **one** person. Jesus, needing solitude, was suddenly confronted by thousands. Still, He, the Good Shepherd, had compassion on them. He set aside His own needs and began to minister: teaching, healing, encouraging. Amazing!

When evening came, the **disciples** had had enough...and they had some compassion too as they realized it was time to send people off so that they could get food. They approach Jesus. He's having none of that. "You feed them", he says.

I fed one. But thousands? Really? I think we all understand when the disciples say "Who Us? ...we have only five loaves and two fishes!"

That little bit, they gave to Jesus. He blessed it. And repeated "Now, you feed them". Those five loaves and two fish were distributed to 5000 men, plus women and children, and when all had eaten, 12 baskets of left-overs fed the no doubt dumbfounded but happy disciples.



There are many who delete the supernatural, the "miracle" from this story. We hear that getting 5000 people to open up their own lunch sacks and share with those who didn't bring anything is really the miracle....that Jesus didn't just conjure up bread and fish out of thin air, or so little as to be close to nothing. I can understand that, but I can't serve it up to you today, because I believe we **NEED** to have the miracle. **Why?** Well, for that answer we have to place ourselves once again into the time and history of the people involved.

Being fed in lonely places with miraculous food would immediately, vividly and awesomely take each and every Jewish mind in that big crowd right smack dab to the Exodus; the time wandering in the desert where there was NO food. Forty years of NO food. **Moses** didn't feed the children of Israel. **God** did. Miraculously. He sent a frosty sort of coating to cover the land like

dew....gathered and baked it was bread...He sent quail where they couldn't possibly have lived....harvested and roasted it was meat. This was the work of Almighty God. And centuries later, the feeding of the 5000 was done not by the disciples really, but by **Jesus**, who therefore **HAD** to be God. It was a clear testimony to the divinity of Jesus Christ. If Jesus fed multitudes with bread and fish, meeting the needs of all and collecting left overs, then He was not just a special kind and compassionate person, not just a great healer, not just an orator, not just a Rabbi, not just someone who might deliver them from Rome, he was GOD. And now the disciples **KNEW** it. They knew something else too. Even though God was the provider through Jesus, they had a part to play in delivering the food. They were part of the miracle. Jesus didn't just say "Bless this food", and have hot bread pop into everyone's laps. He could have. But He told disciples to get the people ready, and break the bread and pass it around and collect it all up. He demonstrated that the participation of human disciples was **included** in the work of God to bless and satisfy the hearts, minds and bodies of all His children.

It is important to realize that this miracle of the feeding of 5000 is the only miracle included in **ALL FOUR** Gospels. The birth of Jesus is included in only two. The raising of Lazarus in only John. So when Mathew, Mark, Luke and John all include this story, it indicates that we are supposed to pay special attention to it. The details vary in each version. Little boy bringing the lunch? Interesting! Sitting down in army type units? Interesting! But who Jesus IS...**HIS IDENTITY**.. that's essential. And that, my friends is **WHY** we need to keep the miracle forever, not toss it out...because we **NEED** to know who Jesus is. So did the disciples. So did the crowds. And it is ever so.

WE are to be part of God's miraculous healing of our world. WE are keenly aware that we in ourselves cannot do that. But we are not **on our own**...we are not just persuasive people trying to model sharing and compassion..although that is hugely important. We are Christians under the authority of and commissioned by God Almighty to build His Kingdom. To this task we must bring what we have..and not hold back...give it over..and Jesus can take what we bring and bless it and make of it more than we can ask of even imagine. With left overs! **Nothing** is hopeless. **Nothing** is impossible. Miracles **do** happen. We are the people born of God's grace..co-workers with Jesus.

We can rejoice today, not in the details of the miracle, but in the **IDENTITY of Jesus**. We serve no super man, we serve the living God. Amen.

Prayer for today:

Lord Jesus, we are stricken with awe as we consider all your Words and Works which accomplished the miracle of the feeding of the 5000. Your words directing your disciples. Your words of seeking the Father's blessing. Your words placing the task in the hands of those who followed You. Your grace and your mercy, even in fatigue and grief, your compassion for those who needed not only bread and fish, but more so the fullness of knowing your identity as the Son of God. Turn our hearts and our minds to the Scriptures constantly that in them we may partake of the Bread of God in every word that proceeds from His mouth. Then help us to share, to take what little we have and give it to God's purposes, asking His blessing upon it and leaving the "fruit" of the gift to His power and His glory. Amen.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be among us and remain with us always. Amen.

