

Coop's Scoops # 223 Sunday July 25th, Liturgy, Sermon and Prayers

God has visited His people!



Readings:

2 Samuel 11: 1-15

Psalm 14

Ephesians 3: 14-21

The Collect:

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us your mercy that with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: John 6: 1-21

6 After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias.^[a] **2** A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. **3** Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. **4** Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. **5** When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" **6** He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. **7** Philip answered him, "Six months' wages^[b] would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a

little.”⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him,⁹ “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?”¹⁰ Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they^[c] sat down, about five thousand in all.¹¹ Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.¹² When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.”¹³ So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

¹⁵ When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

¹⁶ When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷ got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.¹⁸ The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.¹⁹ When they had rowed about three or four miles,^[d] they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified.²⁰ But he said to them, “It is I;^[e] do not be afraid.”²¹ Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

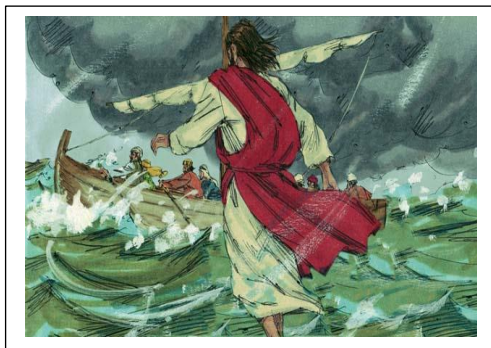
The Sermon:

Our Gospel from St. John picks up this morning where Mark’s account left off last Sunday. We recall that Jesus and His disciples set out by boat to find some solitude. Mark and John both tell us that crowds raced to beat them to their destination. John, however, points out that the crowds were in the multiples of thousands. How difficult that would be for folks who were already exhausted from work, and full of grief about the murder of John the Baptist. Perhaps they could summon up the strength to serve a few, but thousands? Because of great compassion, they waded in and began. There were ministries of healing. At some point, on a hillside, the thousands sat down. Jesus spoke from a slightly higher elevation. When He spoke, there were no microphones! Instead there were people like Town Crier’s who were posted within shouting distance of each other and who

repeated the words of Jesus as He spoke them. The 12 would be amongst those communicators! They worked all the day long. When evening neared, the **disciples** had had enough. They approach Jesus to tell Him it is time to send the crowds away so that they will be able to get food. Jesus is having none of that. “You feed them”, he says. Really? Feed thousands in a desert with no markets in sight? “Who Us?” sounds like a mighty reasonable question to our ears! ... “we have only five loaves and two fishes!” Those , they gave to Jesus. He blessed them. 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 were the evening meal for 12 dumbfounded but happy disciples. And we are left to mull over what happened, and what it means for our time and place.

There are many scholars who choose to delete or tone down the supernatural, the “miracle” from this story. They tell us that getting 5000 people to open up their own lunch sacks and share with those who didn’t bring anything is really the miracle. They insist that Jesus didn’t make bread and fish for all from next to nothing. I can understand that viewpoint, but I won’t serve it up to you today, because I believe we NEED to have the MIRACLE. Why? Well, for that answer we have to find a seat beside a first century Jewish person and chat.

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; to the time wandering in the desert where there was NO regular 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. The miracle 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 inspirational orator, not just a Rabbi, not just someone who might deliver them from Rome, he was GOD. Now the crowds and the disciples **KNEW** it. And just in case it needed to sink in a whole lot deeper, Jesus follows up with another miracle.



Having to escape from folks who wanted to take Him by force and make Him King, Jesus heads higher up the hill to pray. In the darkness, His disciples get into a boat and start across the sea to go to Capernaum. They leave even though Jesus had not yet rejoined them. Wonder why? That's an interesting thought all it itself,.. isn't it? Anyway they soon find themselves in great peril as winds blow strong and waves become fierce. Then they see Jesus, walking on the water, and they are terrified! Why? Perhaps they thought they were hallucinating. Or thinking that the end was obviously very near. But one clever fisherman in Newfoundland once told me that they were most likely terrified because they would have to take Jesus on board. The slightest imbalance on that tiny craft would send them all to the briny deeps. Jesus dispelled the idea that He was a ghost by firmly shouting **"It is I"** . **Then He** dealt with the "we're done for" fears by saying **"Do not be afraid"**. And so they took heart and then they **WANTED** to take Him into the boat. Having done so, we are simply told that immediately the boat reached the shore where they had been going.

Again millennial sceptics discount the miracle... telling us that Jesus was actually on a great sandbar they didn't know had arisen in that area of the lake; that the Holy Spirit didn't get them to their destination immediately, must have been a sort of tidal wave. Never mind that there are no tidal waves on inland lakes. I can only repeat that I believe the miracle is needed, or it would not have been recorded. What does this miracle of water walking tell us? That Jesus is God. Again, to His Jewish listeners, hearing that Jesus walked upon the water meant that He was not merely a prophet like even the greatest prophet Moses. He was greater. Moses, at God's command, parted the Red Sea so that the people could walk through it on dry ground. Jesus just walked on the wet water!

Whatever challenges we face, our courage will grow as we remember not only what Jesus did, but how His actions assure us about **Who He is!** We do not serve a merely super man; or a wellness guru; or a genius; or a great community activist. We serve the living God! And that is an honour, a responsibility and a joy to be treasured. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Prayers of the People: Connie Knighton

Leader: Oh God, you who accomplish far more than all we can ask or imagine, hear these our prayers in this time of uncertainty. Calm our fearful hearts and clarify our confusion,

The People: that we may know the depth of your love and mercy.

Leader: We recognize the ways in which our human folly has contributed to the collective misery of the world. We pray for those tormented by memories of the cruelty of indigenous residential schools. Restore them to peace and honour,

The People: that they may know the depth of your love and mercy.

Leader: We pray for those whose homes and livelihoods are threatened by drought, wildfires and famine. Give us the wisdom and the will to correct the lifestyles of mindless excess which have contributed to the destabilizing of our climate. O Lord, heal our world,

The People: that we all may know the depth of your love and mercy.

Leader: We pray for the poor, the sick, (pause for people to speak names), the bereaved (pause for people to speak names), the children and the elderly, and especially in those nation's hardest hit by the pandemic. May those of us who have much be willing to share with those who have little,

The People: that we may express the depth of your love and mercy.

Leader: We pray for our leaders within the church and within government. Given that they too are human, help us to bear with them when they enact policies with

which we do not agree. Give us humility and wisdom to support our leaders prayerfully and compassionately,

The People: that they may lead with love and mercy.

Leader: We pray for the future of St. Thomas, Bracebridge. Give decision makers courage and vision and give us all the will to accept the changes necessary

People: to continue to minister from out of the deep resource of your love and mercy.

Leader: Hear our prayers,
that we may love you with our whole being
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

The Blessing:

May the God of the peace that passes all our understanding keep your hearts and minds fixed upon the love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, and the blessing of the God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always.

- Judie+