

## Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August Reflection

### Matthew 14: 13-21 Feeding the Five Thousand

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. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. 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.' Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' 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. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

"Wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles," is sung by Motel in Fiddler on the Roof. What relevance has this to the feeding of the 5000? One could say very little but this is the only miracle of Jesus referred to in each of the 4 gospels apart from the resurrection. A miracle among miracles!

About a month ago I used this as a starting point for an evening service and then find out it is the set reading for today and I am leading the evening service so I have prepared a sermon for it. What else can I say about this passage?

A God of abundance is at work here - not just enough but much left over when all were fed. Our God is not one of limitation but of abundance and exuberance in so many ways. We only need to look around us to see the abundant variety in creation; shades of colour; variety of smells, shapes and sizes of plants and animals and so much more.

God is also abundant in Compassion and Grace. Jesus is tired and wanting space but despite that when he saw the crowd "he had compassion on them and cured their sick."

Have you ever felt that God is too busy to be bothered with you and so have not brought your needs before him? God is never too busy or tired for "he who watches over you neither slumbers nor sleeps" to quote the Psalmist (Ps 121:4).

How God will respond to your need is not for us to decide we can leave it to the God who knows more about our needs, life and purpose than we could ever know. An experience we live through today may be the lesson we need to learn from to face a situation in the future or to help someone else in his or her journey in the days of the tomorrows.

The preacher who can hold your attention is often the one who can speak from experience and share what they have learnt from their walk with God through good times and hard.

A couple of weeks ago when I was out walking I had a conversation with a man unloading his van. He spoke of the Covid situation and said "It's like mother nature saying to people - "Go to your room and think about what you have been doing to the world". Many a parent would have used similar expressions to their children. I might not use the phrase mother nature but might well insert God in that phrase.

In college we were encouraged to "Theologically Reflect" and often we struggled with it but over the years it becomes more natural - where is God, what is God saying, in this situation? These are good starting questions.

Theologically reflect on what God has shown and taught you in the last 4 or 5 months ; these lessons may well be of use in the days ahead.

