

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever*

Hebrews 13:8

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost +

The Gospel today is well known to us. Jesus multiplies the loaves and fishes and the multitude is fed. This portion of the Gospel is read on the fourth Sunday of Lent, Laetare Sunday, or refreshment Sunday to remind us of the ministry of Jesus to bring us the Refreshment of God. All that we need or will need for eternity has been or will be given to us by our loving God and Father.

To comprehend the nature of the message of the Gospel for this Sunday we may do well to look in two directions. To look back and consider the history of man and his relationship with the God who created from His nature which is Love. In the Divine Love God creates and orders all that is or will be. He has given to all that He created what they need.

Philosophers have long contemplated the world, the sky and what is beyond what we can see or imagine. The ordering of world was one of the earliest clues to the reality of God. I will use the Greek Philosopher Plato as an example of this thinking to illustrate for you what I mean.

In simple terms Plato suggested that everything in the world had a purpose, and the purpose of everything was two fold. First, the thing existed to use things of an order lower than itself. Thus animal ate plants. Things also existed to be used by those things of a higher order, thus carnivores eat other animals. In this way Plato is suggesting that there is a pyramid which stretches from the lowest non-sensate (non-thinking) beings (The dirt of the earth) to the very pinnacle of creation, that being which is aware, thinks and was the source of the ordering of all else that exists.

It's easy to understand why St. Paul could speak to the Greeks of the Unknown God and suggest that their unknown god was known to him as the God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But has this to do with the Gospel?

When we look back into history we understand that God created with a purpose and ordered so that all that He created would have what was necessary for them. The ability of man to eat the fruit of the Garden of Eden and when driven from the Garden to be able to eat of the fruit of the earth was not an afterthought, but part of God's Divine Plan. God has always provided for man food enough and more.

The only time there are shortages of food, in human history, is when sin has entered onto the relationship between people.

Specifically we as Christians find it important to consider the relationship between God and the Hebrew People. God makes a Covenant with Abraham and God Provides. We read in the Old Testament the many accounts of God not only providing, but doing so in many, diverse and spectacular fashions.

From the Ram caught in the thicket which was sacrificed rather than Isaac, to the Manna in the desert, to the locust and wild honey that John the Baptist ate. God provided for His people. It has been His Will and Purpose that we have what we need to survive and to share from the bounty He has given us.

So that is the history, the looking back. Now we look to the present and in the present we will be allowed to see a glimpse of the future.

Jesus is with the people. Today we read John's account of the miraculous feeding, but all of the Gospels recall these events of Jesus feeding a multitude. The people have come to Jesus, because he is teaching them, loving them and healing them. That is the first important element for us to consider. The people came to Jesus and in coming to Him they receive what they truly need. Perhaps not what they want, but what they need.

It is late they need to eat and Jesus asks what is available for them. Five barley loaves and two small fish is the answer. The simplest food and in an amount that would not satisfy a family let alone 5000 men. What man can provide is not enough, what man can produce is not enough, what man can offer is not enough, but Jesus takes what is offered.

Jesus takes what is offered. This is the second important element for us to remember from the lesson today. Jesus takes what is offered. He takes and He offers thanksgiving, Blesses and breaks the bread. This is the basic movement of the Eucharistic Liturgy - Take, Bless and Break

What has been blessed and broken is now offered to all who are present. All eat and are filled and so that no one, either those present or those who would later read the Gospel may be confused, the Gospel records that the broken pieces left over are collected and fill twelve baskets.

We are to understand from this number that not only was there enough to feed all who were present, but also a basket for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. A basket for each for the tribes of the Covenant - God continues to provide for His People.

In this miraculous feeding we also see the future, the sacramental nature of the church and how the celebration of the sacraments points us towards the Wedding Feast of the Lamb, the end time. We are given in this age to have the Bible, God Holy Word recorded for us so that we can know and study the events of the ministry of Jesus and what occurred after His Resurrection.

On the day of Resurrection, on a lonely road leading away from Jerusalem, Jesus meets two travelers. They were not Apostles, but are part of the larger group that followed along with Jesus. They are talking as they walk and Jesus comes along and walks with them. He joins the discussion and teaches them again about all that He did and how all that He did fulfilled the prophesy about Him.

They are prevented, we are told, from recognizing Jesus. But in His Resurrected Body He walked with them, taught them and led them to the truth. Then when He was with them at supper, He took bread, blessed and broke it for them and they immediately recognized Him. They knew Him in the breaking of the bread.

And so it has been and will be forever. Those who come to Him he will teach. He will love them and know them and they will know Him and Love Him and through Him they will know and love the Father. He will heal them and give to them all that need and more than they came imagine or conceive. This will be the fulfillment of the promise of God to be with His People to be with them and to provide.

Until that last day we will gather, we will hear His Word. He will teach us, heal us and love us. And we will take the bread, offer the prayers of thanksgiving. We will break the bread and share the new life we have found in Christ with all who come to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him.

Amen