

22 July 2012

Reading: Mark 6.30-44 (NT pages 1009)

MP 664 The Spirit lives to set us free

Sermon

It seems to me as if this story in our bible is widely known. Why do I say this? Well, one night after a meeting I went to Asda for some messages. I had my collar on and as my trolley was quite full, an Asda employee walked past me and with one look at my trolley he said: So Father are you off to feed the 5000?

What is the significance of this story?

Well I guess it involves food and food is important to all of us. It was not different in biblical times. However food was scarce and regarded as precious and no one dared to waste any food. The poor people's food existed mostly of bread and fish like we find in our reading.

Fish and especially bread were central components of the Palestinian diet; meat was rarely available except at feasts. Food was always sold in village markets, and the Galilean countryside was full of villages; but Jesus had withdrawn his followers some distance from the nearest villages. Even the larger villages would have under three thousand

inhabitants; despite Galilee's agricultural self-sufficiency, feeding the crowd in the villages would thus have been difficult. But it would have taken around eight months of hard labor to feed the great multitude that had assembled. A common laborer's wage for one long day was a *denarius* which was a silver coin equivalent in value to the Greek's drachma

That the grass is green indicates that it is spring, around Passover.

Jesus organized the people in ranks like armies in the Old testament and in the Dead sea scrolls. The purpose is to facilitate the distribution of food. Mark records this organizing, however, simply to emphasize the great numbers being fed.

It was customary to begin a meal by giving thanks for the bread and then dividing it.

The multiplication of food is reminiscent of the miracle of God supplying manna for Israel in the wilderness, and especially of Elisha multiplying food where some was also left over. Ancient ethics frowned on wasting leftovers, although aristocrats often flaunted such waste.

The term for “baskets” here was often used for wicker food baskets but could also mean the large baskets in which Roman soldiers carried their supplies.

What is the meaning for us?

I think a lot of people like myself read this passage and say WOW! To feed 5000 people with only 5 loaves and 2 fishes, that was a miracle!

But if we think about it again the miracle is not only something of the past. It still happens every moment of every day! God is presently still feeding not only 5000 but the whole world, billions and trillions of people everyday around the world. He feeds everyone, the sinners like you and me. If this is not regarded as selfless love, I DO not know what the definition of love is then.

And today He is feeding us with more than earthly bread. He is nourishing our faith, making us stronger and giving us renewed hope. He is reminding us once again of what He did for us. He is telling us to trust Him because He is taking care of us all. He is reminding us of his selfless love and free grace. He is showing us the way, the truth and the life. He is touching our realities and reminding us of our true destiny namely that we are children of his kingdom.

And all that are tired and weary can come and just be in His presence – knowing that the Lord God will transform and renew any believer through His Holy Spirit.

The discovery the other day of the “so called” god particle, really surprised me. To think that God can fit in a microscope – THE God that feeds the whole world on a daily level and still continues to be present in the lives of billions of believers!

I am sure if people really start to think seriously about the mysterious being of God and His Almightyness, they will restrain themselves of speaking about something they have no clue of.

So let us tell this story again and again but not as something that happened in the past, but is happening in the present starting with ourselves. Maybe it can sound like this: “Today God fed me with a good breakfast and when I went to church He fed me with renewed faith hope and love when I took part in Holy communion which is a remembrance of my salvation from sin, death and hell ...

Amen