

Sunday 2nd August 2020 – Pentecost +9 – Hugh's Sermon

In The Name of Our Creator.
The Son Our Saviour and Redeemer
And

The Triune Spirit Who is With Us Always.

One of the things that is delightful about reading the Gospel stories about Jesus is each of them tells the story in a different way. As you all know, only Matthew and Luke tell about Jesus birth. Only John tells about The Triune Spirit in the resurrection for the people of God, as Jesus takes on human form. The sermon on the mount is unique to Matthew, and only Luke tells the wonderful stories of the Good Samaritan and prodigal son. The people saw Jesus and his family, Mary his mother, his brothers and sisters, they saw Jesus as part of the community, Jesus was the carpenter's son. But all four of the Gospel writers include the story of Jesus miraculous feeding of the multitude with a small amount of bread and fish. The presence of this story in all the Gospels is a clear indication that this was an important event for those first believers, capturing as it does Jesus concern for both the material and the spiritual needs of the people. When they were sick, Jesus healed them, when they were downcast Jesus gave them encouragement, and when they were hungry in body and spirit Jesus fed them. The feeding of the five thousand is a special story because it recalls the many times in the past when God acted to feed his people. We remember when God provided manna in the wilderness during the exodus. One reason why this particular story became so important for early followers of Jesus is that it reminded them of the meal they have each day when they gather to celebrate the evening meal and thank God for what God has given. But my brothers and sisters can you not see and hear the Eucharist that you and I celebrate, Jesus pick up the bread, prayed to the Father, and broke it, gave it to them, Jesus took the cup and said drink. Two thousand years later you and I still celebrate the Eucharist.

I believe our Gospel lesson for today reveals Jesus at a time of physical exhaustion. For if you remember that Jesus was rejected in his home community, by his own people, of Nazareth. The religious authorities were criticising Jesus and his followers for not following the letter of the law, and do not forget Jesus has learned that his cousin John the baptiser had been executed, so you and I see the scenario in which Jesus is trying to bring people back into the relationship with God. Even going into a boat, Jesus could not get any rest, going into the boat did not work. The crowds travelled long distances, they wanted to hear God's message. Matthew tells us in his Gospel they were determined to see and listen. The disciples expressed a genuine concern to Jesus that the people would need to leave in order to avoid problems in getting their homes, and the evening meal. At first the disciples seemed that they did not care. But you see Jesus took a different approach, he showed compassion and love for the people, Jesus also wanted to give an example to his disciples, to show God's Love and compassion to all people as the disciples carry out their ministry. I believe Christianity treasures this story because it captures the way in which Jesus challenged the disciples to understand the problem of feeding all the people. Now the disciples were shocked by what Jesus was suggesting, because they did not understand who Jesus was, instead it became a problem, we cannot do this, we do not have enough, we only have five loaves and some fish. Again Jesus was teaching the disciples to think not in terms of what they did not have but rather in terms of what God has given them.

I believe the message for you and I in Matthew's Gospel today is when we embrace a challenge, no matter what it is big or small we need God's help in the vision we have for our parish. The people of God and The Triune Spirit can accomplish what is needed in their vision for the parish.

You and I will never know for sure what happened that day when more than 5000 hungry people were fed. Some believe that Jesus literally broke the bread and fish and they multiplied in a mystical manner, but I believe Jesus being the teacher saw an opportunity to show the power of the Spirit of the One True God, Jesus pick up the food prayed to the Father, and shared the food to all who were around him, and when people saw this happening they also shared what they had brought with them. What happened was that a loving community was formed where each gave what they could and received what they needed. I believe that was the miracle. We read in Matthew's Gospel this morning how Jesus shared God's Love displaying compassion for the earthly needs of his people. These were people hungry and very little hope in their lives. Even today in our world we know the effects of illness on our finances and on our family. But here people that threw caution to the wind and followed him to the wastelands of Galilee.

Thankfully Jesus had compassion for these people in today's text. But why is Jesus so moved by their suffering? His divine Spirit makes it possible, for as a man, Jesus can identify with our needs, Jesus can do so with infinite compassion, God's Love for you and I. Jesus does not stop at dealing with illness and hunger. Jesus shows compassion for the Spiritual needs of the people. Jesus as a man understands our Spiritual struggles in this world as he struggles himself to keep faith with The One True God. The people in our Gospel were looking for Spiritual help and Jesus gave them what they needed, first ,healing the sick, and food for all. Jesus was carrying God's mission to bring back God's people into a greater relationship with the One True God. When Jesus walked this earth, despite what people were expecting, Jesus did not establish a kingdom of power on earth, Jesus did not overthrow the romans with victorious army. Jesus did not come flying in carried by angels. Instead, Jesus showed up in a manager in a small village, instead Jesus died on a cross, instead, Jesus showed the people of Israel to be in a relationship with The One True God, also my brothers and sisters You and I are in that relationship.