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Sunday 2 August

Trinity 08

Isolation Radio Talk

Feeding of the 5000 (Matthew 14.13-21)

Enough is Enough: Took - Blessed - Broke - Shared.

Hello and good morning.

Sophisticated and modern you may be, but I hope you believe in miracles. If there should be some of you disposed not to believe, please listen with new ears. You are not looking at a miracle long ago but a miracle for today; or maybe a parable; that is, a heavenly story with an earthly meaning.

The event of the feeding of five thousand people is one of the most important passages in Christian Scripture; it is the only one to appear in all four Gospels. More importantly, it is written in the style of the worship of the early Church and, yes, our own. Matthew tells us, Jesus **took** bread, **blessed** it (meaning gave thanks), **broke** it and **shared** it away. Wonderfully, there was sufficient for all and more.

Is it a miracle that is a parable or is it a parable that is a miracle? Either way it is remarkable!

As usual the Gospel accounts differ in detail, but the similarities are there. You can engage in wonderful discussion and argument, and so you should, about exactly what happened and how. The truth is, you can never know, and that is what I like; and that does not matter. What is important to understand is that people, who were hungry, and had few resources, were fed.

Was it physical or was it spiritual?

The second thing to notice is that along with other miracles this one also involves the very ordinary stuff of life. There was nothing magical here, or indeed, in other miracles recorded in the Scriptures. Truth to tell, they involve commonplace things like touch, spit and dirt, water, fish, loaves - bread broken.

What makes it a miracle, is not something dropping from heaven. Oh no! What makes it miracle, is that in the middle of ordinary everyday life, the impossible happens; you knew it simply could not happen; would not happen; but it did. It is not like winning the lottery; rather, it is the accomplishment of God's purpose from what seems impossible - the healing of the sick, the feeding of the hungry, the liberating of the oppressed, the uplifting of the downtrodden. If it was miracle then, it is surely a miracle today. Even a casual glance in this country or abroad pleads for such a miracle again.

The disciples ask Jesus to turn people away, 'let them look after themselves' they say - I've heard that about Overseas Aid; I've hear that about FoodBanks. But Jesus says 'You take care of them'. 'We don't have enough', they continue. Now, here is the miracle. 'What you have is enough, bring it to me'.

What we, what you and I, need to understand, is that for those people, who came to see and hear Jesus, to bring no food would have been unthinkable; no fast food for them; take it with you or go

hungry. Giving loaves to Jesus was to give them to someone whose only intent, was to offer them up and to give them away. How many loaves are enough? Just how many *do* you need that you may believe and be faithful. When I think of those days last March when Supermarket shelves were stripped, the miracle is that what you *have* is enough - it is enough already. It is certainly enough if you are prepared to give it away.

Believe then, in the power of God, to accomplish the miracle. I know you will say, you need yet more. You must believe you have the resources - and you do; believe you can use them well; believe that what God has given you *is* sufficient. Try not to be like the fearful steward of the parable who buried the treasure afraid that it was not enough.

It is a real problem today - you need to look slimmer, have this, buy that, speak a certain way. You may think your Christian faith separates you from others; that you know better; you do not. You are set apart to serve; there will always be those in our parish and Church who are much further on the pilgrim road of discipleship. They will sustain you on the way. You will care for them, but *they* will sustain *you* - if you let them.

Remember again; you have enough already. You need not fear to offer what you have - all of you, each of you. The miracle is that what is offered truly in love, and in God's name, will be multiplied.

I will give you a reason why you should trust in Gods miraculous power. It is the cold harsh lesson of times past and our own day that those with barns full of grain do not feed the hungry. The trickle down of wealth, no more than the trickle down of faith, simply does not work. Trade talks that have the possibility of real support for the hungry of the world fail precisely because the rich protect their position.

What I say to you is this: miracles, parables, tell that what you have received must not simply lie there. It is given only, on the understanding that you will give it away - that is what stewardship is about. *Trust* the miracle. What you have, *is* all you need, it is enough. Sadly, the society in which you live, does not believe that; and some in the Church do not believe it either. Like children whose noses are pressed against the window of the shop, longingly they wish they had what was on the other side; they are like the person who one weekend wins millions on the lottery, and the next weekend, still goes and buys another ticket; and when asked how much money is enough, replies, 'just a little more.'

Beware, that with all you have, homes, churches, the resources of time and energy, beware lest the hungry still go unfed, because you think you have not enough. Do not be so unfaithful, but believe that what you are and what you have been given, *is enough*.

Thank you for listening.

And prayer

Wisdom is speaking with words of longing
for peaceful living under clear skies,
for growing crops and water fit to drink,
for just wages and fair prices in exchange for goods.
Wisdom is speaking in the voice of the poor:
forgive us; we have failed to hear and to understand
and accept that enough is enough.

Wisdom is speaking with words of challenge;
inviting us to penitence in place of self-righteousness,
calling us to move from sympathy to solidarity,
demanding justice rather than charity.
Wisdom is speaking in the voice of the poor:
forgive us; we have failed to hear and to understand.
and accept that enough is enough.

Wisdom is speaking with words of comfort;
offering forgiveness for our greed and affluence,
assuring us that our reckless rush to devastation
can be halted and our care of the earth restored.
Wisdom is speaking in the voice of the poor:
forgive us; we have failed to hear and to understand.
and accept that enough is enough.

Wisdom is speaking with words of hope;
promising us that we and the earth can be one,
inspiring us with faith in the power of people working together,
giving us a new vision of partnership and co-operation.
Wisdom is speaking in the voice of the poor:
forgive us; we have failed to hear and to understand.
and accept that enough is enough.

Wisdom,
help us to listen,
to understand
and to accept
that we
may share the salvation
of the God of the poor.
Amen.