

Sunday 28th July 2024

The Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Gospel Reading

John 6.1-21

Feeding the Five Thousand

6 After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. **2** A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. **3** Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. **4** Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. **5** When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, ‘Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?’ **6** He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. **7** Philip answered him, ‘Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.’ **8** One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, **9** ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?’ **10** Jesus said, ‘Make the people sit down.’ Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. **11** Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. **12** When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, ‘Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.’ **13** So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. **14** When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, ‘This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.’

15 When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Jesus Walks on the Water

16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, **17** got into a boat, and started across the lake to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. **18** The lake became rough because a strong wind was blowing. **19** When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. **20** But he said to them, ‘It is I; do not be afraid.’ **21** Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land towards which they were going.

Other Readings: 2 Samuel 11.1-15 Psalm 14 Ephesians 3.14-21

Homily

The school holidays have just begun for many children in our diocese. We often think of school holidays as a time when children and families have opportunities to relax and have fun. Hearing John’s account of the feeding of the crowds in one enormous picnic seems rather apt in a season where we imagine families picnicking in the

sunshine. While picnics may be planned for some this summer, the truth is that, for many, they are not possible. In January this year 2.1 million school children were eligible for free school meals. The Food Foundation estimates that over 24% of households with children are living with food insecurity at home. This issue intensifies during holidays when free school meals for low-income households are not available. In response, many Christian organisations offer practical support, many Christians advocate for affected children, many churches hold children and households especially in their prayers during school holidays. We might each have our own response to the issues of food poverty in our communities. Today, might we reflect upon them further as we consider Jesus' feeding of the 5000?

In Jesus feeding the 5000, we might be reminded today that we can trust Jesus.

5000 people is a lot of people and to provide them all with bread was, we hear, far beyond the means of the disciples. We hear that they have nothing but five loaves and a couple of fish. The disciples only have a little, and the crowd is so great. But the disciples entrust what they have to Jesus. And Jesus shows them that they can trust him. He invites the people to sit down. He then takes the bread and takes the fish and gives thanks for them. The food is then shared with the people. The small amount of food which has been entrusted to Jesus is transformed, all are fed, and there is such plenty that twelve baskets of leftovers are collected. Jesus is trusted with the little they have, and he transforms it.

It likely took courage for the boy and the disciples to offer the little they had to Jesus. Perhaps they looked at the smallness of what they had to offer, and wondered if it was worthy of being offered. We might even do something similar ourselves. Might we feel that the smallness, inadequacy and insignificance of what we can offer, are things that simply are not worthy enough to be brought before God? And yet, perhaps we can think of times when we have trusted God with the little we have to offer, and God has transformed it, done far more with it than we could ever have imagined. We trust. God transforms.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised about this because the parables about God's Kingdom tell of God creating something wonderful from something very small. Jesus teaches, over and over, that God creates something glorious from the smallest of things. Today we may be reminded that trusting God with a little, and witnessing God transform it, was not reserved only for the crowd on the mountainside near Galilee. This is for us too, both individually, and together, as church. When we trust God with what we can offer, God can take it, transform it, and use it in the building of God's glorious Kingdom.

Today, trusting Jesus with the smallest offering of fish and loaves was the beginning of a story. That story continued with a demonstration of God's power to transform. What we entrust to God is only the beginning of a story too, a story which continues with God's transformation of what is offered, in line with God's good plans and purposes. God's work is in the transforming of scraps of food into feasts, transforming the most ordinary things into wonderful things. As we ponder the

issues of food poverty, particularly those affecting children this school holiday, might we be encouraged by today's Gospel. This issue, like the crowd, is great. So might we, like the boy, simply offer the little we have and entrust it to Jesus. We can offer prayer, practical support, advocacy or another gift, no matter how small, in response to the issue of food poverty this summer. And perhaps, like we heard today, God will transform the little we offer into something which makes a huge difference.

Conversation Questions

1. Have you noticed God's transforming work through the smallest of offerings made?
2. What are the issues in your community where you long to see God's transforming work? Is God calling you to offer anything, even something small, in response?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

Almighty God,
who sent your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of your Church:
open our hearts to the riches of your grace,
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

(or)

Gracious Father,
revive your Church in our day,
and make her holy, strong and faithful,
for your glory's sake
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

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