

God meets our needs

Sermon preached on Matthew 14: 13-21, the feeding of the 5000

Earlier in Matthew's gospel he records Jesus saying, "Don't worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear.... Your heavenly Father knows that you need them" (Matthew 6:25,32). And now in today's reading we see Jesus doing what He spoke about: meeting people's needs, healing those who are ill, providing food because He knows they are hungry. Interestingly, the people come to Jesus wanting healing and wanting to hear what He has to say to them, but apparently they don't ask Him to do anything about their hunger, and certainly the disciples don't expect Jesus to do anything. Perhaps they think, "That's too small a thing to bother Jesus about," or else, "It's our own fault for not bringing food with us." We often have things we think it's OK to ask God about and things we feel He wouldn't care about. The disciples see the problem and want to send the people away to get food, away from Jesus. But Jesus feels sorry for them all (the Greek says, "He was moved deep inside/ in his guts"), and He does something about it. And not just the bare minimum, but loads of food, so that they can't eat it all and lots is left over, presumably to be taken home; it would not be Jesus' way to make too much food, just so it can lie around and rot.

And this is not the only time Jesus does this miracle, so it's not a token miracle, to show that He can multiply food, but not to be done again. No. In the next chapter of "Matthew" Jesus does the same miracle. Surely it's telling us: if we are trusting God as Christians, God knows our needs and wants to meet them, and will meet them. Instead of ignoring Him or going away from Him when we have a problem, let's bring our needs to God. That's true for our worries about money, our health, the washing machine, house and car, and worries about our families. I've

mentioned before some wonderfully encouraging times when I think Kathy and I have seen God give us what we've needed, sort out car problems, provide money or help when we've needed it. I hope that you also have instances when you've seen God noticing your needs and doing something about them. If not, ask Him when some need crops up; don't walk away from God, as the disciples and the crowd do, but go to God and ask Him to do something. And tell me any answers!

And isn't it interesting how Jesus involves people in the miracle. He uses the bread and fish that somebody has bought, and He involves the disciples in giving out the food. The same thing happens when Jesus meets his disciples by the Sea of Galilee after his resurrection: He invites them to bring some of the fish they have caught ie to contribute. Let's use what we have, the little we have, in possessions and talents, and ask God to do something with them.

So God knows our needs and wants to meet them. But it doesn't stop there. God doesn't offer to meet our needs just so we can sit at home, be free from worry, and be cosy. It's surely to free us up to do more for Him. The miracle comes straight after Jesus hears about the death of John the Baptist. Jesus is trying to be on his own because He must have been sick with grief at John the Baptist's horrible death after Herod's drunken dinner party. Also, He'll have known that the same thing will happen to Him. It must have been maddening for Jesus when He is trying to get away to grieve for John to find himself surrounded by thousands of people clamouring for his attention. But He gets on and meets their needs. This is not a happy, relaxed summer's outing and picnic. There's an urgency, with corruption and evil around. And there is today too. God wants us to rely on Him so that we can get stuck in to doing something about all the problems that there are. As I said before, the disciples see the people's need but don't think they can do anything. God says, "I will meet your needs. So get

up and do things for me." Just as Jesus involved the disciples, He's relying on us today. And they couldn't do anything on their own, but with Jesus they could. We too can't do things on our own, but with Jesus we can.

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