

*Good morning everyone,*

*In our Gospel journey through Mark, we have now reached the story of Jesus feeding a multitude with just five loaves and a couple of fish. But rather than deal with it in one sitting, our lectionary compilers have given us four Sundays to cover this hugely significant event! In order to do this, they give us an excursion into the Gospel of John who gives a deeper, and much longer reflection on the meaning of this story. For John, the feeding of the five thousand at Passover time deliberately foreshadows the Last Supper. In fact, this is his version of the institution of the Eucharist. He makes no mention of the breaking of bread and giving of wine ceremony in the Upper Room on the night before Jesus' crucifixion. Instead, he focuses on what that event will mean for his disciples: to 'break the bread of their own lives' in self-giving service to God and to people, as symbolised in the washing of feet ceremony.*

### **2 Kings 4: 42 – 44**

In addition to the story of God feeding his ancient people with manna in the wilderness, we have another brief story here that no doubt provided inspiration for the Gospel feeding miracles. As in the Gospels where Jesus has compassion for a large number of hungry people, so here we find Elisha the prophet of Israel having compassion on the gathered company of prophets who were hungry because of famine in the land. Elisha orders his servant to feed them with the twenty available barley loaves in spite of the servant's protest that there is not enough to go round. Elijah insists that God has promised that they will be fed and there will be food left over.

### **Ephesians 3: 14 – 21**

The first part of this epistle ends with a prayer summing up what has already been covered in the text and anticipating the second part. The prayer alternates between extolling the greatness of God's love and the life of the Christian within that love. God our creator has glorious riches with which to bless us, but the writer (Paul, or more likely a later disciple writing in his name) prays that God will strengthen the readers so that they will be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. God's power is beyond our imagining, yet it is always at work within us. This is true even for those who do not know it. The hope in this message is that the Church as God's family will one day extend to the whole of humanity.

### **John 6: 1 – 15**

The reference to it being Passover time is not simply an incidental note about the time of the year. It is stated to link it with the Last Supper, and, as mentioned above, this is John's version of the institution of the Eucharist, making the important point that this liturgical activity is the Christian Passover centred in the person of Jesus himself. The feeding of the multitude is reported in all four Gospels, and each reflects the words and actions of Jesus breaking bread at the Last Supper ('he took, he blessed, he broke, he gave').

We cannot underestimate the social/political implications of the miracle whether we understand it as a factual event of a feeding of a multitude with very little food, or as

a parable of the significance of Jesus himself as the bread who satisfies all our hungers. It contains a powerful message of justice, that God's desire is for all people to be fed and not have to live with hunger. Those who have enough and more than enough are called to share with those who have little. We know that on a global scale it can be done. We just need the will, the energy, the commitment, and a reordering of priorities as nations and peoples to make it happen.

However, John's version of today's miracle provides a warning against greed, dependence or craving for bread (food, physical satisfaction) alone. The crowd is preoccupied with Jesus' material provision of bread, rather than the real or whole message that it seeks to communicate. We read that they wanted to 'make him king' (not that it was in their power to do so!). Jesus' kingdom is not of this world (as he later says to Pilate). So he withdraws from them. The point of the miracle was to assure them of God's loving concern for them and to encourage them (and us) to understand that the characteristics of God - love, selflessness, self-giving service, generosity, grace, must be the characteristics of our life, in our relation to God, to each other and to the whole world.

A prayer for the day:

*God our Father, you give your children everywhere all the good gifts for a fully human life. We repent of the ways that we human beings often prevent those gifts from being received and enjoyed by all. We pray that Jesus your Son will continue to give us the bread of his word that nourishes our faith and outlook, his peace that gives us rest and assurance, his consolation that gives us hope and joy, his nourishing bread of the Eucharist that sustains us on our journey to you and makes us into members of your family on earth. May your generous gifts inspire and empower us to share the bread of our own lives with everyone as a token of the festal meal that you are preparing for us in your eternal kingdom. We ask this in the name of him who is Bread of life for us all, your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Wishing you a good Sunday and every blessing for the week ahead.

With love and prayers,

John