

## **THE FEEDING OF 5,000**

Our Gospel this Sunday August 6 is Matthew 14:13-21—The feeding of 5,000; the 5 loaves and 2 fish; the 12 baskets of leftovers. How many times have you heard this story? If someone asked you to name the miracles of Jesus, wouldn't this one make the list? Why is that? Think about it. How many of Jesus' miracles are recorded in all four Gospels? Let's count. It shouldn't take long because the feeding of the five thousand is the only one that made the cut (Matthew 14: 13-21; Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:5-15). That fact alone should encourage pause and reflection when it comes to hearing again this miracle that most certainly put Jesus on the map. Why this story? What is so important about it? What does it reveal about God, about Jesus, about who we are called to be in the world that each of the evangelists said, "Hey. Now *that* story is definitely worth remembering."

Of course, there's the obvious answer: this is a pretty awesome miracle, after all. It is a synopsis of provision and the poignancy of need. Sometimes we forget that to be provided for and to have our needs met are indeed miraculous moments themselves. Taking away the reality of miracles does no one any good. We need them.

Jesus' providing for the crowds is just one part of this miraculous feeding; he is also providing something to his disciples. There is a sense that this story sums up discipleship. An invitation to action and involvement. That discipleship is not just about following but participating. In this provision of food for many, the disciples witness that the promise of provision is their future. And Jesus signals this promise with one pointed phrase, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." In other words, you do it. In that one simple statement, Jesus is saying to his disciples, "Live already. You can't sit back and watch me do all this awesome stuff. Live it. Live life. I am counting on you. I need you."

There is indeed a lesson here for us as disciples of Jesus. The disciples are thinking linearly, practically. "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." A deserted place? Where will the food come from? Late? Time to go home. We are done here. What more do you want? And come on, Jesus. These people need to fend for themselves. This is a major lesson in discipleship, Discipleship 101, to be exact. Discipleship is rarely tidy or convenient. What you will be asked to live — and when — may just be a miracle itself.

Surprisingly, unexpectedly, the feeding of the five thousand gives witness to what the space between death and resurrection looks like. For the crowd. For the disciples. For Us. Where there is profound need, but the experience of provision. Where we exist in the meantime of life, but can see, though often dimly, solutions. **Where and why and when we think we can't go on, but then we do. That is truly miraculous!**

***Come and worship this Sunday and live the miracle of Christ***