

They were Satisfied

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Tenth Sunday after Pentecost) is Matthew 14:13-21. This text is the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. This is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels.

This text includes a rollercoaster of emotions. The day begins with the news of the death of John the Baptist. Jesus experiences deep sorrow. He wanted to mourn in solitude. At John's death, the tide is turning adversarial toward Jesus.

The day continues with the return of the disciples from a short-term missionary journey. They had had tremendous success on their brief missionary excursion and were euphoric. They were eager to share their news with Jesus. He wanted to spend time with just the disciples. He wanted some alone time with them and so they went to a desolate place. But the crowd followed him and surrounded him and his disciples. The crowd was fueled by their many needs.

When Jesus sees the "large crowd," he did not hide from them because they had needs only he could supply. He had compassion on the crowd. The Latin literally means to "suffer with, to feel the pain and suffering of another." Compassion comes from identifying closely with another. He had this desire because they were as sheep without a shepherd, going about aimlessly and lost.

As the hour for the evening meal approaches, the disciples come to Jesus asking him to send the people away so they may buy food. Food here is plural and indicates the many kinds of food that the people might buy.

Jesus reminds the disciples that the people do not have reason to leave, because Jesus can feed them. Unexpectedly and forcefully, Jesus challenged the disciples to provide food for this vast crowd. He planned to teach them an important lesson. Matthew states that the disciples had already reviewed the crowd and found only five loaves of bread and two fish—food common to the poor of the Galilean district.

When it says "he looked up to heaven and said a blessing," Jesus begins in the right place and overlooks no spiritual detail. They were satiated (to satisfy fully – to indulge excessively – gorge). All of the people had enough to eat, and none went hungry.

The left-overs amounted to many times more than the original five loaves and two fishes. One commentator makes an interesting point here that each disciple had a basketful and each then ate from his own basket for then or for the next day.

Whenever you have doubts about God's power to supply your needs, whether physical or spiritual, recall this miracle. Jesus is able to provide.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for abundantly answering my prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread." Amen. (TLSB)