

Lent 4 2017 St. Michaels

The early Christians saw in the Miracle of the feeding, a prefiguring of the Eucharist where the Lord made himself known in “the breaking of the bread”, and this story is the most popular subject of their primitive art.

What we heard this morning, is the most read of all our Gospel’s in the Prayer Book (three times a year), this is the only miracle narrated in all four gospels.

Why were the multitudes following Jesus.

Why do people, you and I, follow Jesus?

In John this morning we read – of a great multitude following him “because they saw the miracles which he did”

and in Luke we read they “followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.”

In Mark and Matthew we read that Jesus was moved with compassion; however, Matthew also mentions that he “healed their sick” and Mark speaks of them as not having a shepherd as “he began to teach them.”

A critical mind could conclude that in these four gospels, the crowd may have been following for some entertainment value,

(even today, one can just look at the “entertainment” value in some places of worship)

and some may have been following for the seeing miracles of healings (once, again - just as some do - even today.)

Although they may not have been interested in a Saviour from sin, they did seem interested in a “worker of miracles.”

Even so, we can also see that they were receiving the Gospel of God as he spoke of the “Kingdom of God”

and they surely seem to be as sheep without a shepherd.

One could easily make the case that they were simply there because they were being called – for or by whatever reason.

Just as I believe many of you have been called / or are being called.

Let us just say then; that they were there because that is where God wanted them to be –

just as all (of you) sitting in His Church this morning.

Their desert place, which had grass growing on the side of this little mountain,

was the Church for these five thousand people (not counting the women and children.)

Instead of having a place of man-made beauty as we have, they had a natural beauty consisting of very little; however, they had the True Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, leading them (what a privilege and joy they experienced.)

The Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh (a time when the Jews celebrated their deliverance from their bondage in Egypt)

and some with Jesus this day were probably seeking someone to lead them away from their bondage to Rome.

And today, it seems that people are looking to escape any bondage to anything that requires a disciple and obedience to any truth.

But I will say that all of these cases, whether it be from Egypt, Rome, or any authority,

the only true deliverance for a Christian / is a deliverance from Sin / which separates us from God.

And now we have the main event – the feeding of all those people.

Some people may ask how did he do this – the feeding of so many with just a few loaves of bread and few fish,

and some will actually preach on this reading (I have heard these sermons) that “well... he was actually just feed them spiritually.”

This is a cheap and narrow view of our Lord and contrary to early Church teaching..

Three of the Gospels all use the exact same words that “and they did ... eat, and were ... filled” and John agrees that “they were filled”.

Bottom line, they did eat food and were all filled.

And yet some wonder how this could be?

The God who created the world out of “nothing”,

the God who shows miracle after miracle in scripture throughout the history of mankind

this is a God who is master over all things, and all things of nature.

Later in the evening (according to John) on this same day of this miracle,

Jesus would be “walking on the sea”

– once again showing that he is above nature (and in this case, even above the sea.)

So let us not question the power and love of our Christ, for out of his love for His people,

He manipulated the nature of fish, and they multiplied outside of their normal nature.

He said and it was so.

So let us share in our Lord’s miracle this morning – yes you and I.

Would you like to see a miracle this morning? –

would you like to participate? – well, just have a seat next to one of the five thousand sitting on that grassy hill –

ask them to move over so you can have a good seat and view...

Four weeks ago we had an Instructional Eucharist and learned of the four things (the four actions)

that a Bishop or Priest must do to celebrate a worthy Eucharist Service, and how “the four actions” correspond to the four-fold action our Blessed Lord performed at the Last Supper

(as we will see soon during our Maundy Thursday service.)

Let us examine and review once again and see what Christ did to feed the thousands:

First during the instructional Eucharist we discussed the Offertory – as the celebrant receives the bread.

In the Gospel this morning and in all four versions of today’s Gospel:

Jesus takes the five loaves (and just the loaves alone in John’s account) along with the fishes also in Matt, Mk, and Lk.

Do you remember how we said the word Eucharist means “Thanksgiving.”

Well, secondly we have the Consecration – the giving of thanks.

In our Gospel from John, Jesus gives thanks, and the Greek for “give thanks” is / eu cha rist e o,

from which we derive our word for the Christian Eucharist - Thanksgiving.

All accounts of this event states that he did bless (ed) - (Mt, Mk, Lk) and John actually uses the words “given thanks.”

Thirdly, in the celebration of the Eucharist we have the Fraction – the breaking of the bread –

and we read in Mt, Mk, and Lk that Jesus “brake” the loaves, and in John He distributed to his disciples (since most commentators suggest that 12 were there, although not mentioned)

this would suggest that the loaves had been broken.

And the last act, the fourth thing, is called the Communion – the distribution.

All four accounts indicate that they did eat.

So, let us join those sitting on the grassy hill – as we receive Him this morning, He who fed those that day is He who feeds us today.

They that day were given food to eat, which would give them strength, but you are about to receive something even greater –

the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ –
whom did feed the multitudes that day,
and who will feed you this day.

My brethren, this is one of the beautiful characteristics of Christ's
Apostolic Church.

This is why the early church and us today marvel at the unceasing
power of our lord and Saviour.

This is a gift that He gives us – **then and now** as

We join with those of the past – with the very people that Jesus fed
that wonderful day –

we are joined with them, **and Christ**, today.

Come to the altar rail and feed upon what Christ has given us – His
Body and His Blood.

I want to end quoting the last verse of the Gospel this morning:

“This is of a truth / that prophet / that should come into the world” –

So, one could say that they went out to see a prophet, but we say with
a certainty “yea, He is more than a prophet.”

This was and is the Christ,

the Son of a Living God: Come,

behold Him that takest away the sins of the world.

For He is here today, give yourself to him and him only,
your heart, soul, and mind.

Let the whole Church (militant, expectant, and triumphant) join
together, for all ye that travail – he has come not only to “refresh” each
one of you –

but also to **SAVE YOUR SOULS**

from the pits of hell.

Come unto Him this day, be His forever.