



8th Sunday of Matthew

Today's Gospel message finds Jesus in the desert with a large crowd of people, who are hungry. But this doesn't stop Jesus from making this desert a "garden full of food." After asking his disciples to feed the people, they bring him 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. Symbolically, the 5 loaves represent the 5 Books of Moses, and the 2 fish represent the 2 different communities (Judean and Gentile) that come together to be God's people. Just as law and manna were linked in the Old Testament (in the story of the Exodus), bread and gospel are linked in the New Testament. The bread that Jesus feeds the people with is none other than the gospel, the good news of God's coming kingdom (see also, Matthew 16:5-12).

Scripture: Matthew 14:14-22

Bottom Line: God's word can make any desert a garden.

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus was filled with pity and "healed" the sick. Knowing that Jesus wanted the disciples to "feed" the people with the gospel, how do you think he "healed" people? What do you think they were sick with? How can you be a healer in your community?
2. Why do you think the disciples didn't get it? Do we "get" it today? How can you do a better job of "feeding" those around you?
3. It says there were 12 baskets left over. What do you think this symbolizes? What about the 5,000 people? Thinking in this way, how does it "enlighten" your reading of scripture? Does this new reading call you to action? How so?

Moving Forward

At the beginning of the story, it says that Jesus had compassion on the people. His compassion is a result of the leaders of the day (the Pharisees and Sadducees) not "feeding" the people with God's instruction. Instead, they twisted the teaching to suit themselves and to become wealthy in worldly terms. So, instead, Jesus turns to his disciples and asks them to "feed" the people. Unfortunately, they too don't understand that Jesus is asking them to teach. They mistake the "bread" that comes from heaven with the "bread" that comes from the earth. And, unlike normal bread, "heavenly" bread is never completely consumed. Today, we too are called to "feed" the people. We are called to "feed" our children, our neighbors, and even the stranger. Will you understand Jesus's call to "feed" the people?

Changing Your Mind

"Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.'" (Matthew 14:16)