



GOSPEL GOSSIP

There is a boy here...

John 6. 1-21

Sunday 28 July 2024

This week's passage from St John's gospel once again gives us two for the price of one. Almost incidental to the main story, Jesus is found by his disciples to be walking on the lake whilst they were in a boat. They were naturally terrified, but as on many occasions, Jesus tells them not to be afraid. The main story is Jesus' concern for the crowd who were following him, and his meeting of their needs both physical and spiritual, something also echoed in the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

A young lad seems to share Jesus' understanding that people get hungry. He must have spoken with Andrew, because Andrew knew about the lad's picnic when Jesus wondered how the crowd would be fed. Any of you with children will know the refrains on a car journey: Are we nearly there yet? or I'm hungry. The lad had brought food with him, and perhaps was wondering when Jesus was going to stop so he (and others) could eat. Perhaps he heard murmurings among the crowd, and told Andrew. We don't know, but what we do know is that Jesus used the lad's lunch to feed thousands and with plenty left over. It's odd, isn't it, that the disciples should be frightened when they see Jesus walking on water, but not when he performs a miracle such as this – after all, both are contrary to laws of nature, logic and experience.

- What is the greater wonder – Jesus walking on water or feeding the five thousand? Why?
- Why were the crowds following Jesus for so long – what were they hoping for?
- Do you doubt the power of God and maybe surprised when, like the disciples, you are tested?
- What is your reaction when Jesus asks you to do the seemingly impossible?
- Are you prepared to own up honestly to what you have to Jesus, or would you prefer to keep some things hidden?

Jesus sometimes spoke about children. He told the disciples to let them come to him. He said that we had to become like children to enter the kingdom. He didn't differentiate between children and adults, accepting them, healing them, raising them, allowing them to assist in his ministry. Our reaction to the lad's offer might well have been dismissive at worst or condescending at best. Yet that offer was made simply and sincerely. It was all the lad had, yet he was willing to entrust it to Jesus, not knowing what would happen. Some people may call the lad's actions naïve, but don't they really display a complete faith and trust? We don't know what happened, but it's not impossible that others around were ashamed and starting pulling out their snacks as the food went round, and adding to the amount, inspired by the lad. That's no less a miracle in itself.

- Do you want to hang on to what is yours at all costs?
- What moves you to share?
- How much are you prepared to give away?
- Is your faith too erudite or not experiential?
- What do you think of others' gifts to the Lord, and how do you react to extreme generosity?

So often young people are spoken of as 'the Church of tomorrow'. They are not. They are the Church of today. Yet they are not always accepted as equals on the Christian pilgrimage. They are looked down on. Their gifts and offerings are considered second-rate in comparison to ours. Maybe Jesus' attitude towards this lad is a hidden miracle for us as well.