



The Word...

The Twelve approached him and said,
"Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms
and find lodging and provisions."

He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves."
They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have,"
Now the men there numbered about five thousand. ...
Then taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven,
he said the blessing over them, broke them,
and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

They all ate and were satisfied

(Lk 9:11b-17).

Pondering the Word...

There's one little word in the last line of this passage that jumps out at me: "*They ALL ate and were satisfied.*" ALL of them.

Let's think about the logistics here. When the Apostles ask Jesus to dismiss the crowd so they can get something to eat and somewhere to stay, they might be talking upwards of 10,000 people. We know the men numbered 5,000, so with wives and kids...Even without the extras, I doubt many of the surrounding villages and farms would accommodate thousands of people showing up out of nowhere. I wonder if the Apostles just don't want to be responsible for all these hungry folks! They are in for a surprise!

We don't know about the nationality of this throng. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus has already been traveling in Gentile territory (8:26-39). He has healed people from Tyre and Sidon and the centurion's servant (6:17-19; 7:1-10), so his reputation has spread far and wide. We can't be sure, of course, but it is reasonable to assume both Jews and Gentiles are represented in this crowd.

Jesus takes five loaves and two fish—seven items—seven being the perfect and complete number, and all eat, and all are satisfied. We don't hear anything about the Jews being served first, or the Gentiles getting what is left over or being left out. Again, we don't know, but maybe Jews and Gentiles sit together and share what they have. That's the impact Jesus' love can have: that ALL are welcome to be together as one.

There are theories and suggestions made by scholars about how this miracle, which is recorded in all four gospels, came about, but one thing is for certain: No one went hungry. No one was told they couldn't be there. And ALL came away from this encounter with Jesus satisfied.

Living the Word...

In the Catholic lectionary today, the second reading is from 1 Corinthians 11. Read the entirety of the passage (v.17-34). It provides the context. What do you think Paul is saying? Does your community welcome ALL to come to Jesus' table without judgement and partake of the feast? Are ALL invited to eat and be satisfied?

Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

Mon, Jun 23: *"From heavens the LORD looks down, to see all the human creatures. From his firm throne he surveys all who dwell on the earth. He fashions their hearts one and all. He understands all their doings. The king is not rescued through surfeit of might, the warrior into saved through surfeit of power"* (Ps 33:13-16, Hebrew translation).

I've been drawn to use poetry and song lyrics lately, verses that speak to messages in Scripture. Today's psalm made me think of Julie Gold's song "From a Distance," (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFxgrbcr0vE>, this version sung by the late Nancy Griffith in 1987). I always loved this song that reminds us we are one family. But listening to it today made me sad, so far are we from the positive, hopeful images portrayed. We are not called to look from a distance, but to stand up and face the ugliness we see in our world. **Provision: "God is watching us." "God understands all our doings."** Yes, God is watching us, but God understands us too. That's what the Incarnation is all about. But that doesn't let us off the hook. We need to stop putting our faith in would-be kings and ruthless warriors. What can you do today to work for God's Kingdom?

Tue, Jun 24: *"Ah, Lord GOD!" I said, "I know not how to speak; I am too young." But the LORD answered me, "Say not, 'I am too young.' To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Have no fear before them, because I am with you to deliver you", says the LORD (Jer 1:4-10). So...what's your excuse?*

Wed, Jun 25: *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"* (Mt 7:15-20). A most important and timely message Jesus has for us. *"Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"* Yes, indeed they do if they've been led to believe they were getting grapes and figs in the first place! Do people have the patience to wait until the fruit has ripened? I don't think so; it's more like, *"What's in it for me today?"* **Provision: Beware of false prophets.** We are overrun by them. Who do you follow? Who do you listen to? May I humbly suggest you listen to what Jesus has to say? Follow him, not any human leader, party, fad, or trend. Use your conscience. Don't be eaten alive by false prophets who feed on the vulnerable.

Thu, Jun 26: *"Knowing the correct password—saying 'Master, Master,' isn't going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is obedience—doing what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, 'Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our super-spiritual projects had everyone talking.' And do you know what I am going to say? 'You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don't impress me one bit. You're out of here'"* (Mt 7:21-29, from *The Message*, translation by Eugene Peterson). **Provision: Beware of false prophets (2).** These three readings—yesterday's, today's, and tomorrow's—all address in some form those who purport to preach and act in God's name, but who do so for their own ego, power, or financial benefit. When we are judged, we will not have the luxury of pointing fingers and blaming others who led us astray. *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God"* (1 Jn 4:1). If what you hear is not of love for all, it is not of God.

Fri, Jun 27: *"I myself will look after and tend my sheep.... I will give them rest" says the Lord GOD. "The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back"* (Ez 34:11-16). Such a comforting message, especially for those of us disillusioned by scandals, abuses of power, and hypocrisy in our governments and churches. *"Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely"* (Lord Acton). It's imperative our trust be placed in the One—the only One—for whom absolute power results in absolute Love! **Provision: Beware of false leaders.** Preceding verses recount God lambasting the leaders of Israel for scattering God's people: *"Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been pasturing themselves."* God desires unity for all people and creation, not division. If what you hear is about an Us/Them philosophy, if it is about revenge, it is not of God.

Sat, Jun 28: *"Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully." He said to him, "I will come and cure him." The centurion said in reply, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof"* (Mt 8:5-17). I've always thought about the risk Jesus is willing to take to enter the Gentile centurion's house, but I've never considered the act of submission the centurion makes referring to Jesus as Lord. While I don't know if it is a risk for him, it is quite an admission of the authority of Jesus...all done for the sake of love. **Provision: Humble yourself in the name of love.** Can you recall a time you have humbled yourself in the name of love? A time you were belittled or mocked for showing compassion? *"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great"* (Mt. 5:12).