

Sunday, July 31, 2020

When we look at this morning's Gospel, as I mentioned before, it's found in all four Gospels, which makes it rather unique. Therefore, we're going to begin our sermon like detectives, and we are going to investigate the incident. We are going to look at all four Gospels and try to pull everything together so we can get a clear picture of what actually happened when Jesus fed the 5000.

The first thing we have to do is a little bit of a background check. There were a couple of things that preceded this account. First of all, when we look at Mark chapter six, we see that it was right before this account that Jesus sent out His disciples two by two. So, six groups that he sent out. And we read that Jesus gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He also told them they were to take no bread, they were to take no bag, they were to take no money. Why? The Lord would provide. And along that same concept he also told them wear only your sandals, don't take extra shoes and take only one tunic, the one on your back. Again, the idea being 'The Lord will provide' and It resonates with what we read about the children of Israel in the wilderness that their clothes did not wear out and the soles of their sandals never wore out. Jesus was asking them to trust Him. He gave them a message and the harvest potential; the message and the potential of harvest was huge because they were to go throughout all of Israel. When they shared that message, He told them if they listen to you stay with those people in that town. Once again, there is a big harvest potential. Or if they don't listen to you, leave. But shake the dust off the sandals of your feet as a sign against them. In other words, saying 'OK you don't want to hear the truth, fine, my job here is done,' and move on with the hopes that they say wait, wait, wait come back!

And so, we read that they went out and proclaimed that people should repent, and they cast out many demons. It is pretty profound, isn't it? What happened after that? We read in Mark 6:30, the apostles returned to Jesus and told Him all that they had done and all they had taught. How did Jesus respond to that? Listen very carefully, I think this is a key component. "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest awhile." Now why would they need to rest for a while? Mark

gives us part of the answer, he tells us “for many were coming and going and they had no leisure even to eat.” I think of that right now because that really comes home for me. My wife, as many of you know is a respiratory therapist at Saint Joseph's Medical Center in Stockton and they have had a very high influx of COVID-19 patients. She comes home exhausted and said she didn't even have a chance to have any sort of break or in some cases working a 12-hour shift with no time to have a lunch or anything like that. It's just and when that happens, people quickly wear out and they need a little break and that's what Jesus told them. It must have been appealing to them when Jesus said a desolate place. That means no crowds, just Jesus and his disciples. Where was that desolate place and what else led up to them going to this desolate place?

That is now when we go to the gospel of Luke, we can fill in some blanks. Jesus had been on the Eastern Shore of the Sea of Galilee from the Gerasene's where he healed that demoniac of the many sorts of evil spirits the Legion evil spirits. That scared the people in that town, and they asked Jesus to leave so He and His disciples got in the boat and they went across to the western shore, the north-west Provence, to Capernaum. That was kind of Jesus's home base of operation. But from there then they walked to Nazareth which was traveling Southwest and uphill. When they get to Nazareth, in this hill Country there the people Nazareth, Jesus' hometown rejected Him. From there it was back to Capernaum where his disciples caught up with him after he sent them from Nazareth to go throughout all of Israel preaching this good news. So, they've been on the Eastern Shore they gone to the western shore they've gone on a hike about a 20-mile hike up to Nazareth. From there they've traveled all around Israel so they've put sixty, seventy, eighty miles on their feet, returned to Capernaum and now they're going to go back to the North Shore to get Bethsaida, which is where the Jordan River comes in to the sea of Galilee as well as four other river or creek drainages of the Golan Heights and the mountains there which exceed 9000 feet.

The area of the Bethsaida today is called the Golan Heights the elevation there around Bethsaida itself at the sea of Galilee about 400 feet or so below Sea Level. And the Golan Heights go up to 1700 feet in

that area. Now we go back Matthew, and what do we hear? After Jesus says come away by yourself to a quiet place and rest for a while? When the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns, notice that's plural. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd. So the disciples in Jesus go from the northwest corner to the northeast corner and the crowds hear that's where they're going, they run along the shoreline and as they go through town to town, the people ask where are you people running to? We are running to Bethsaida, Jesus the great Prophet, the miracle worker, He's going there with His disciples. Have you not heard how they have gone throughout Israel and they healed the sick, they've cast out demons? Come on!

So, when the disciples come ashore on their vacation, they find a great crowd waiting for them. So, what does Jesus do? John record Jesus went up on the mountain and then He sat down with His disciples. So, Jesus passes through the crowd and then He goes up on the mountain. For it to be the mountain, it's probably be highest Hill in the area about 1700 feet up. But you're going from below sea level so He's making a 2100 to almost 2300-foot elevation gain which if you've been hiking, you know it's a significant gain. And Jesus' disciples, I can imagine we're just saying, 'I thought Jesus, we were going to a desolate place to rest. We've just rowed across the sea of Galilee, we've gone all over the place, now we are going to the top of the mountain?'

And we read in Luke 9, they, the crowd, followed Him. And one He welcomed them, two He spoke to them of the Kingdom of God, and three He cured those who had need of healing. Why? These people had followed Him on foot, all this way. They had followed Him up the mountains. It was a difficult hike and if He cured those who had need of healing, I want you to think how in the world did they get up there to 2400 foot or so elevation? Those who were sick, were probably carried and Jesus had compassion on them. They had needs and He took care of them. He healed them physically, and He taught them, bringing spiritual healing.

As we continue in Luke we read, "now the day began to wear away and the twelve came and said to Him... I want you to think about what you would say if you were there and you were in their shoes. You have been in Capernaum, you have gone to the Gerasene's, you came back to

Capernaum, you went up to Nazareth, you went throughout Israel, came back to Nazareth through Capernaum, one of Jesus said you need a vacation you sail over to Bethsaida, you climb the mountain and would you saying something along the lines of, 'we're tired. You said Jesus, we need to be alone. You said you want some time alone with us and now you're spending all your time with them. It's just not fair! That is very close to what they said. When we look at their actual response, just the four words tells us they were upset. They say to Jesus, I quote, "send the crowds away." What do they want the crowd to do? Listen carefully send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions for we are here in a, I quote: "desolate place." In other words, it was your idea for our vacation we are in the desolate place and this crowd is intruding. And Christ's response to them is, I quote: "You give them something to eat." At that time, I could just imagine, some of them wanted to go ballistic.

We read in Mark that they respond, "Shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" Notice, shall we go? This is your idea, this crowd followed You; we followed to get some rest. Send them away. A denarius was a day's wage; 200 denarii 50 weeks of labor or a full year of labor. What does Jesus say? Give it give it to them; no charge. And I can just imagine those disciples saying 'Jesus we're fishermen, we're not rich. What's in our treasury is what we worked for. Now you want to take away we worked for, what we earned, and give it to those who've done nothing for your ministry?' Maybe some thoughts of yours have been that way recently as the government hands out money here, there, wherever; that you think, 'hey I paid my taxes, and you're taking my tax money and giving it to them?' If so, you're probably feeling a lot like the disciples.

And look a what Jesus said, and listen so carefully again. How many loaves do you have? Go and see. They knew they were going on a vacation to a desolate place. If you were going on a vacation to a desolate place, would you not take food with you? So, notice what Jesus is saying. Go and check your provisions, how much did you bring along? They went to the crowd and they found that one boy who had brought with him five small dinner rolls, two small fish. Remember the people had heard Jesus was going and they dropped everything to follow. It was a boy's food; it

was not their food. It was not the food they had found. They didn't want to share. and Jesus commanded the crowd to sit, and He took those five little loaves and those two-small fish, He blessed them and then fed the people and there were 12 basketfuls left over.

I want you to think back to the comment, 'it's not fair.' it's a common refrain we hear today. Within a family the older children will often complain it's not fair the younger one gets away with bloody murder. And the younger one will say it's not fair they have driver's license they have a car, and you pay for their college, but you don't have enough to pay for my college, it's just not fair! You hear it in the classroom. The C student says, 'it's not fair. The A student is smarter, the A student has parents that helped. The A student this, that, whatever, and the A student is saying, it's just not fair! You're using a rounded curve. You're doing this, you're doing that, I work hard for my A. If they hadn't spent their time in sports or whatever they could have done better too. So, they deserve worse. We see it in the world of sports the starter says, 'I worked hard.' The non-starter says it's not fair, we should all play an equal amount of time. No, it's totally fair, I worked hard! We see it in life, you name it especially today you have the educated against the uneducated; you have races against each other all over the place; you have genders and new genders. It's not fair! You have it in retirement it's not fair government retirements don't get cut, but private retirements do get cut. It's not fair with wages, why should a lawyer get paid you know \$150.00 an hour or whatever when the person who's feeding him his food is making minimum wage? Welcome to life in a sin marred world.

There is a hymn number 562 in our Handbook we haven't sung it very often, it has a little bit of a different tune but I I'd like you to listen to what it says. It is such a tremendous message. All mankind fell and Adam's fall, one common sin infects us all. From one to all, the curse descends and over all God's wrath impends. Welcome to life. Sinful life, it started with Adam. Through all our powers corruption creeps. That sounds like Washington or Sacramento, right? In us in dreadful bondage keeps, in guilt we draw our infant breath; and reap its fruits of woe and death. From hearts depraved to evil prone, (Think of some of the protesting going on right now) flow thoughts and deeds of sin alone. God's image lost. The darkened soul seeks not nor finds its heavenly goal.

This is what God was saying in Isaiah, look to the heavenly goal, not the here and now. But then we read, But Christ the second Adam came to bear our sin and woe and shame, to be our life, our light, our way. Our only hope, our only stay.

We hear a lot “it's not fair!” In reality; yes, it is. We choose to sin, we choose to remove God and when we do sin, we choose to lose His blessing. Do you want to know what's not fair? Let's put it into perspective. Of all the people ever born, only Jesus perfectly fulfilled the will of God the Father Almighty. Yes, He took on the accountability all of us. Now that's just not fair. Of all people ever born, only Jesus perfectly sinless. Yet He bore the penalty that we earned for ourselves; the torture, the death on a cross; now that's not fair. Put it another way, as Paul writes; “God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for our sake.” That's just not fair. It is not a fair exchange! Jesus took our sin and our guilt and gave us His own righteousness. Putting it another way, and this is an object lesson in that as we do these digital services and try to sneak an object lesson in here and there. We and our sinful lives and work are kind of like a used Kleenex. It's really not worth anything. It's trash. On the other hand, Christ righteousness is like the key to a brand-new truck. Who in their right mind would accept the used Kleenex as payment for a new truck? But that's exactly what God did. He accepts us because His Son is worth more than anything. Through that blessed, unfair, unrealistic exchange we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. It's just not fair. Aren't you glad it isn't?

In our Savior's Name, Amen.