



1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, 2 *I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:* 3 *And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.* 4 And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? 5 And he asked them, *How many loaves have ye?* And they said, Seven. 6 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. 7 And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. 8 So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. 9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away. (Mark 8:1-9)

This miracle is recorded also in Matthew 15 and follows that of the feeding of the 5,000. There is some very interesting background that needs illuminating regarding this particular miracle. You may remember the casting out of demons from the demoniac of the Gadarenes (Mark 5:1-20)? The demons went into the swine of those gentiles of the land and they were destroyed. The healed demoniac wanted to follow Christ: "*And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*" (Mark 5:18-19) Those gentiles of that land (Decapolis) begged Christ to leave their coast for fear of losing more swine perhaps – and He departed. Now, He has returned to Decapolis and was received by this great multitude. Does it not seem likely that these multitudes had heard the testimony of the healed demoniac (as Christ had instructed him) and now welcomed Christ to Gadara?

The text today has greater reach than a cursory reading will admit. It is about the graces and benefits that accrue to the believer from the One who is the Maker and Benefactor of all things to His Creation. Christ had no beginnings for He was with the Father from Eternity Past before the Foundations of the World were laid. Though He benefits His people with Bread and Manna, that Bread which we eat is not that Bread that comes down from Heaven, for He is that Bread of Heaven;

*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. 34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.* (John 6:32-35)

He is both the Water of Life and the Bread of Life. He satisfies both our Hunger AND our Thirst. Just as the Samaritan Woman at the noonday hour came for the perishable water beneath the streets of Shechem, who received the heavenly water from Christ, so may we.

*5 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. 16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. (1 Cor 10:15-17)*

When we partake of the Bread of Communion, Abp Cranmer reminds us that the bread is composed of many, even thousands, of crushed grains of wheat. All of these grains added together comprise the one loaf, or Body of Christ. We die daily by being crushed and maligned for Christ and His people, yet it was Christ who was first bruised for us. He is the TRUE BREAD.

Look at today's text and read with understanding – a deeper understanding:

*1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, 2 **I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:** 3 **And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.***

Christ has always had compassion for the multitude, but what is Compassion? Com = together, or jointly; and, passion = strong feelings of sympathy. Compassion: such depth of sympathy that moves one to act (as the Good Samaritan).

These multitudes had followed Christ for three days. They probably brought rations for one day believing that would be their time with Him. But they hungered more for His Word than for food. This was the True Bread from Heaven. The last days, they fasted from earthly bread.

These unlearned disciples still lack the fullness of understanding of their Lord.

*“And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?”*

They had with them the Maker and Creator of the worlds, but where could they get bread in the wilderness? *“And he asked them, **How many loaves have ye?**”*

God will not satisfy our needs unless we bring our all to the table. If we have nothing, that is enough; but if we have seven loaves, that too is enough.

*“And they said, Seven.”*

*“And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.”*

He commanded that the people be seated to receive the bread. When we come before God, we do not stand on our own feet and feed ourselves. Our works cannot suffice. We must be fed by Him and His ordained disciples.

Our *Cup runneth over*.....plenty for all!

*“And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.”* We must ask the blessings of God and return thanks for the morsels

that we eat.

Christ fed 5,000 at the beginning of His ministry, and now the 4,000 at the ending of it. He feeds with both bread and meat (fish).

*“So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.”*

Just as twelve baskets were left over in the first case, we now have seven left over in this case - the remains of such a small beginning with God. There is always more left over with God than we first possessed without Him.

But Christ will have no waste. Take up what is left and feed others who are hungry in the way. *“And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.”*

We cannot always remain in such close presence of the blessings of Christ. The time will come when He must send us away – not from Himself, but out in the world to act as witnesses for him. If we begin at the feet of Jesus as did Mary of Bethany, the time must come for us to arise and enter the kitchen as did Martha. We cannot simply exhaust ALL of our time in learning. There needs to be a balance between learning and service. This is why Christ will send us out after teaching great promises.

The mother eagle, the Bible tells us, stirs up her nest so that the young eagles will feel uncomfortable and will venture forth to learn how to be an eagle. So the Lord does with His people. Are you still a baby eagle cowering in your nest, or do you soar to the heights of heaven in search of provender?

Today’s miracle presents us with yet another glimpse of the mystery of the Lord’s Supper. In both miracles of the feeding of the multitudes, Jesus gave the people Bread. That bread represents the multitudes who will receive the fellowship of Christ across all ages. That which was missing was the Cup, but the Blood of Christ was yet to be shed at the time of this miracle. It shall come very soon after at a mount called Calvary.

The Body of Christ needs BREAD to sustain it and to give it nourishment. There can be no living Body without a Living Head – and that Head is Christ upon which the Body feeds. He is that bread which came down from Heaven – our Manna.

As we consider the compassion of Christ in feeding the multitudes, we observe that compassion means

1. “Seeing the needs” of those around us.
2. Using the resources available to satisfy the need.
3. Good order in rendering service.
4. Giving all, taking all, and using all that one has.
5. Being thankful for every morsel of Bread that comes from the Hand of God.
6. Being good stewards in saving, and not wasting, the gifts of God.

As we approach this Season of Lent, should we not be keenly aware of the need for Bread, and that we receive it only from the abundance of God’s provision in Christ?

Once fed, Jesus will send us on our way to share that Hidden Manna with others.