

Be

I mentioned before but it's worth mentioning again: today's gospel lesson, the feeding of the many, is the only miracle story to make it into all four gospels.

And because we know that Jesus isn't about magic tricks, that he despises the attention that comes with healing people, we might want to ask what else is going on with this story of filling empty bellies?

Isn't it all about the divine meeting us right where we're at?

In our ordinary lives?

Facing ordinary needs?

And helping us discover that, surprise!

The sacred is sitting right here, in the midst of it all!

Which tells us a lot about how we ought to encounter the Bible, this library of humanity's long conversation with the Source of all that is.

It's about empty bellies.

And human need.

And human messiness.

Some adultery and murder for hire?

It's right there with King David and Uriah's wife, Bathsheba!

She's hot.

He's intrigued.

They do the deed and the pregnancy test comes up positive.

David tries to cover it up by ordering her husband Uriah to go home for the night and sleep with his wife.

Uriah refuses to sleep with her out of patriotic duty to his fellow soldiers, so the king sends him into the thick of battle - to die.

Doesn't this sound like an episode of the Young and the Restless?

Ordinary lives, always and everywhere, intersect with Holy Scripture.

And what about today's ordinary lives?

Lives that seem to be defined by division.

Whether it's the division surrounding the nonsense over who won the last presidential election.

Or the increasing divide between rich and poor.

Or the remarkable divide over whether or not one should get vaccinated against COVID.

Our politics have become so poisonous that discovering your fiancé is in the opposite political party often puts the kibosh on the wedding plans!

Yes, it seems that division is the air we breath, the water we swim in.

But the world that God begs us to enter is not that world.

God's world, a world we can step into at anytime, is not about dividing, it's about multiplying.

How do we take that step?

We take it by changing our standpoint, which in turn changes our viewpoint.

Allow me to explain.

Most of us stand in the world of the market economy.

An economy that "depends upon anxiety, self-preservation and competition." Jennings, *The Insurrection of the Crucified*. 92, modified.

It's a "me-first" view of the world.

A world in which there's never enough.

A world where striving and ladder climbing are all the rage.

Even when the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall!

It's our Monday through Saturday world.

It's a world that says if I don't look out for me, no one else will.

And it turns words like "tithing" and "giving generously" into sentimental jokes.

But Jesus stands in the world of multiplying, in the world of generosity. Id.

In that world, manna falls from the sky to feed hungry freed slaves.

In that world, five loaves and two fish are more than enough to feed 5000 hungry bellies, with leftovers to boot!

And the question that hangs between the world of dividing and the world of multiplying is:

Where does generosity take us?

In our current economy, generosity is often seen as pointless.

Whether it's generosity with our loot, or a generosity of spirit that searches for the good in every situation.

Yet the economy of generosity remembers a truth.

It remembers the truth that we not only come from God, and shall return to God, but that during all of this "in between time" of coming and returning, we belong to God.

In God, we live and move and have our being.

Now.

Today!

Because the Source of all life holds us close.

Never letting go.

The One who is always here.

“If not in your room, then just outside your door.

Where he waits.” Eckhart.

Jesus has the people sit in groups on the green grass.

Creating what is called a “symposia.”

What’s a “symposia?”

A symposia is a word from the Greek philosopher Plato, and (fun fact!) it’s the only time this word is used in all of the New Testament.

A symposia is a fellowship of eating and drinking — but not only that.

It's eating and drinking **while discussing the many varieties of love.** Jennings, 92.

Today, sitting on that green grass, Jesus creates a symposia from this motley crew of democrats and republicans, socialists and fascists, white, black and brown, gay, straight and trans folk.

We know this because all kinds of people are attracted to Jesus.

From wealthy Nicodemus to Herod's butler's wife, to school teachers and madams, to the poor and the outcast.

And with that motley crew (who otherwise wouldn't be caught dead with each other), Jesus feeds them and then, leads a discussion about the varieties of love.

What it's about.

Where it comes from.

How we get some.

And I wonder, can WE have a symposia today?

Not only in our homes and here in the church, but in the wider community too?

Can we come to see that our problem is not our political philosophies, our problem is that we are disconnected from each other, and from God.

How can we reconnect?

Perhaps by remembering who we are.

We are all of us physical beings — with souls.

“By remembering that our soul is not heart,
liver or spleen,
but that which gives life to them.

That our soul is not memory or desire,
but it uses these things as its hands and feet.

That our soul is not the intellect or the will,
it is their master,
it is the background of our being,
an immensity
that can never be possessed.

And because we are physical beings
— with souls —
from within every human being a light shines into the world,
reminding us that of ourselves
we are nothing,
but the light is all,
and when we allow that light to shine through us,
we become
all with the all.

When the soul flows through the intellect,
it creates
genius.

When the soul flows through the will,
it creates the
virtuous person.

When the soul flows through affection,
it gives birth
to love.”

RW Emerson, *The Oversoul*, paraphrased.

To put it less poetically, perhaps we can reconnect with one another, and with God, when we get out of our own way.

When we give up the levers of needing to control people, places and things.

And perhaps most importantly when we move from living in our yesterdays or in our tomorrows (where far too many people spend far too much time!) and instead make the courageous leap to live solely and exclusively and permanently – in the NOW.

Which is, after all, the only real life that exists.

Living only in the NOW may feel like walking on a stormy sea, because the lure of past memories and anxiety over what comes next can feel storm-tossed and overwhelming.

But if we begin to trust the world of multiplying, we ever so slowly begin to experience that generosity doesn't lead to poverty.

Generosity is the only surefire way to true and lasting abundance!

It's a message our nation needs to learn once again, as we are living in times that seek to retreat and hide and conserve.

The barren fruit tree is eventually cut down.

The same holds true for people and nations.

Unless we give we shall die - because only generosity leads to life.

But how can we trust that as we navigate these seemingly rough waters?

We can trust it by keeping our eyes on Jesus.

Striding on the waves.

Assuring us in no uncertain terms,

“Relax!

I am.

Don’t be afraid!”

Remember who, and whose, you are!

“Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Be.”

R.Rohr, Everything Belongs, 62

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