

Sunday 2 August 2020

Eighth Sunday After Trinity

First Reading: Isaiah 55.1-5

The poem ends the prophecies of Second Isaiah. It is a call to abundant life and an appeal for believers to place their trust in God, using David as the example of one who benefited from God's historic covenant with Israel.

*The Lord says this:
Everyone who thirsts,
 come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
 come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labour for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
 and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
 listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 my steadfast, sure love for David.
See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
 a leader and commander for the peoples.
See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
 and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
 for he has glorified you.*

Gospel: Matthew 14.13-21

Following the execution of John the Baptist, Jesus withdraws from the region. He feels God's call to offer deep compassion to the multitudes that followed him. What follows is a miracle story about a messianic meal that is repeated in all four Gospels. Our Eucharist recalls the Last Supper and many other occasions when Jesus gathered his followers to eat together.

*When Jesus heard that Herod had beheaded John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.
When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.' Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.'
They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.*

Reflection

The prophet **Isaiah** issues the call from God to his hungry people. It is in God, and God only, that their hunger will be satisfied and their thirst quenched. He reminds the people of the historic covenant of steadfast love; a covenant with a God who fed his people with manna in the wilderness and water from the rock. Even when they doubted. Even when their faith was lacking.

Time and again the prophets portray the fulfilment of God's covenant promises as a future where the hungry rejoice at the banquet at which everyone, rich and poor, is welcome. The fulfilment of God's promises is the restoration of all those relationships which our eating and drinking together symbolise, and which are so easily distorted by human greed and selfishness.

The story of the feeding of the multitude from **St Matthew's Gospel** was so important to the early church that it appeared in all four of the Gospels. It was important because it revealed Jesus as the fulfilment of God's promise: as the one who continues to feed his children in the wilderness. In this meal, we the followers of Jesus, see the echoes of the Last Supper and of the meal we share every Sunday where bread is taken, blessed, broken and shared. We who share at this table where Christ feeds us with himself, share in a relationship that can never be broken.

For the hungry who stand at our door, whether in a Kentish village or the global village, for the earth whose resources we continue to stretch by our seemingly insatiable appetites, for future generations as yet unborn who will live with the consequences of the choices we make today, Jesus Christ stands at the altar and says: 'You give them something to eat.'

We cannot share at the Eucharist and close our eyes to the emptiness at other tables. We who share the bread and wine of the kingdom are drawn into the covenant community and become part of the active and ongoing story of God and God's kingdom.

And we remember that sharing food carries with it a significance that goes way beyond what sits on the plate. It reinforces relationships. It symbolises a sharing of ourselves. It carries memories and hopes and connects us in love with one another, and with God our provider and creator.

Prayer

Lord God,
your Son left the riches of heaven
and became poor for our sake:
when we prosper save us from our pride,
when we are needy save us from despair,
that we may trust in you alone;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.