

Closing Prayer

Bountiful and compassionate God,
you place in the hands of your disciples
the food of life.

Nourish us at your holy table,
that we may bear Christ to others
and share with them
the gifts we have so richly received.

We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers, OT18A³

CPL • LBC Year A Proper 13.odt • 2020-06-15

³ *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999,*

Proper 13

(Sunday between 31 July and 6 August inclusive)

Principal Service readings

Isaiah 55.1-5	Come to the waters, everyone who thirsts
Psalm 145.8-9, 15-22 [or 145.15-22]	Let every creature praise the Lord
Romans 9.1-5	The privileges of Israel
Matthew 14.13-21	Feeding of the five thousand

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The multiplication of the loaves

¹³When 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. ¹⁴When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. ¹⁵When 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.' ¹⁶Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' ¹⁷They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' ¹⁸And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' ¹⁹Then 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. ²⁰And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Matthew 14.13-21 NRSV¹

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

After three weeks of parables we now move on to an action chapter, in which Jesus performs the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish. Unlike some of the parables in chapter 13 this story is present in all the gospels.² Matthew and Mark also both record two occasions of multiplication (Matthew 15.32-39; Mark 8.1-10). Why might that be?

The story has been retold a number of times, with various pieces of the story being emphasised or downplayed, as well as connections being made with other texts. Matthew has clearly based his account on Mark 6.35-40. Matthew has simplified and abbreviated Mark's account. The setting is the Jesus has just received the news of John the Baptist's death, so we are put in mind of the banquet that Herod held. Jesus is about to celebrate his own banquet – there is quite a contrast between the pride and scheming at Herod's banquet and the trust and sharing at Jesus'.

Matthew's main contribution is to upgrade the image of Jesus' disciples. – whereas in Mark the disciples misunderstand much of what is taking place, in Matthew they show more understanding and function more clearly as assistants of Jesus. They understand but lack faith.

A connection is made with the story of Elisha (“ Kings 4.42-44), where the prophet tells his servant to bring bread so that the people can eat. The servant objects that the bread is not enough for all the people. Elijah merely repeats his command and says that the Lord says, ‘They will eat and have some left over’ (2 Kings 4.43). The evangelist, or someone who has told the story before him, is clear about the connection between Jesus' acts and Elisha's. There is also an allusion to the feeding of the Israelites in the wilderness with manna (Exodus 16).

There is a connection with the Last Supper too. Four verbs serve as the link between the multiplication story and Jesus; actions the night before he died. In both settings Jesus *takes* bread, *blesses* it, *breaks* the bread, and *gives* it out. Both the eucharistic tones and the allusions to Elisha are clear.

Matthew's account also points forward beyond the Last Supper to the kingdom of God, pictured as a great banquet. It is an anticipation of the

² Mark 6.31-44; Luke 9.10-17; John 6.1-13.

heavenly banquet in God's kingdom. (cf. Isaiah 25.6). Matthew refers to the banquet idea also in 8.11-12 ('many will come from east and west and sit at table ...'), and 22.1-10, where the kingdom of heaven is compared to a marriage feast.

Quotations

1

Most of us do not live especially holy lives, after all. We spend most of our time sitting in traffic, paying bills, and being irritated with one another. Yet every week we are invited to stop all of that for one hour at least. We are invited to participate in a great drama that has been going on without us for thousands of years, and one that will go on as long as there is a single player left standing.

Leaving church: a memoir of faith / Barbara Brown Taylor. 2006

2

The liturgy of the Eucharist is best understood as a journey or procession. It is the journey of the Church into the dimension of the Kingdom. We use the word 'dimension' because it seems the best way to indicate the manner of our sacramental entrance into the risen life of Christ. Colour transparencies 'come alive' when viewed in three dimensions instead of two. The presence of the added dimension allows us to see much better the actual reality of what has been photographed. In very much the same way, though of course any analogy is condemned to fail, our entrance into the presence of Christ is an entrance into a fourth dimension which allows us to see the ultimate reality of life. It is not an escape from the world, rather it is the arrival at a vantage point from which we can see more deeply into the reality of the world.

For the life of the world: sacraments and orthodoxy / Alexander Schmemmann. 1973

Related topics

For further study:

Eucharist; faith; discipleship; mystery of the church; eucharist and mission; eucharist as meal and sacrifice; eucharist committing us to the poor; justice; paschal mystery; Jesus Christ