

Matthew 14:13-21

In this familiar story of the feeding of the 5,000 in today's gospel, we see **Jesus' humanity** revealed in his day to day interactions with his disciples and the crowds. For us, this means we see his example for us.

v13a Jesus hears of the death of his cousin, John the Baptist, at the hands of Herod, and he wants to be alone. Jesus is touched, moved by John's death. John had been instrumental in the start of Jesus' own ministry, baptizing him in the river Jordan; and John's death places before Jesus the reality of the path that he also is following. We see Jesus' need for space, to be with his Father, and to pray. At such times, we also need space and time to grieve, to accept, to come to terms with a loss.

v13b-14 Jesus has to put aside his own grief for a time, as others need him. He has compassion on the crowds and is moved by their needs, so he heals those who come to him. Jesus always taught and acted for ordinary people. His Kingdom would be for such as these, not just for the rich, educated or well connected, which is the way the Kingdoms of this world work. As with Jesus, in our lives, often the needs of others place demands upon us, even when we could do with some space and time for ourselves.

v15-16 The disciples are also concerned for the crowds and their hunger, but also for Jesus, who must have been very weary by evening, so they suggest he sends the crowds home. Jesus surprises them by insisting that the crowds need not go home, but can have food provided where they are, and asks them to find it! The disciples are astonished, as they are far away from any shops, and it is late. Jesus is testing his disciples, to see how much they have learnt, how far they can trust him. Jesus could have just clicked his fingers or said a word to produce food, but he is not a magician, and what lesson would that teach the disciples?

v17-18 The disciples do as Jesus asks and search for food, and come up with five loaves and two fish, and offer what they have to Jesus. Often this is all Jesus asks of us, to offer what we have. Jesus uses whatever or whoever is available to do his will.

v19 The crowds sit down, perhaps expectantly, wondering what Jesus will do. Jesus takes the food, blesses it, gives thanks for what God has provided, and gives it to the disciples to hand out. I wonder how often we remember to simply give thanks to God for our food before we eat? Jesus is making clear to the crowds that what they are about to eat is a gift from God.

v20-21 All are satisfied and there is an abundance left over, twelve baskets full!

In Jesus' kingdom extraordinary things happen, it is a kingdom of abundance. People and situations are transformed. Jesus' kingdom is full of surprises, where we are always learning. It is where everyone is included, all are fed, no-one goes hungry. It was the same with Jesus' healings, all who came to him were healed, no-one was turned away.

We see a lot of **Jesus humanity** here, even when performing such miracles: feeling grief, seeing the people's needs, feeling compassion for them, using the situation to help his disciples grow in faith, meeting the needs of all. All this without any grudging attitude, but with an abundance which overflows.

What is Jesus' secret? His relationship with the Father, which we call prayer.

It is to God his Father that Jesus turns in his own need, and it is to God his Father that Jesus holds up the loaves and fish to meet the people's needs.

In following Jesus' example, we too can know God as our Father, pray to God as our Father, find our Father's wisdom and guidance in our lives, and experience our Father's overwhelming provision for our needs.

Let us not neglect such a wonderful privilege.