

Beloved Congregation of Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Mark gives to us another fabulous feeding story though this time different in place, time and number and we have no reason to think that it is a repeat of the feeding of the 5,000 story. Jesus himself refers to both feedings as we will see from Mark 8:19-20 that Jesus confirms two of the amazing stories. The context of the feeding of the 4,000 is important for us to consider as Jesus is revealed to us by the inspired pen of Mark. We will see Jesus as the Shepherd with the heart of God, the new Adam with the power of God that truly Jesus is "...the Messiah, the Son of God."

We have once more center stage the Lord Jesus among the 12 disciples (门徒) and their dull hearts and minds and we see the crowd there in the Transjordan (约旦河以东) region probably there somewhere in the wilderness outside the Decapolis where so many Gentiles (外邦人) made their homes mingled with some less than savory (德行好的, 令人尊重的) Jews. We have considered together Jesus leaving the Promised Land and the miracles that came with Him as a prophet (先知) not unlike Elijah and Elisha who gave hope and wonder by God's power to Gentile woman, yet unlike them in that it was His own power that Jesus displayed. As God brought hope to the Middle East by sending in infamy, Joseph the son of Jacob so long before to Egypt that the world, Jew and Gentile might be fed, and then as God brought hope to complaining Israel in the wilderness so we see the kingdom of God on earth there in the wilderness by the Decapolis. That is the past. The present reality of the feeding of the 4,000 was a wonder which pointed to the future wonder of the Lord's Supper (圣餐) and the great coming feast that Isaiah prophesied of in Isaiah 25 when Jew and Gentile alike would eat the table of the Lord in the great coming day of the Lord! So, it is all there for us, past, present and future that we might understand our own redemptive (救赎的) past, present and future.

In all of this we are called to trust and obey. We called to faith, hope and love. Finally, we are called to repent and believe for the Kingdom of God is at hand. I bring to you the Word of the Lord under the theme:

**The King Reveals His Shepherd's Heart Feeding the Crowd in the Wilderness**  
**1. The Problem of the People's Hunger 2. The Resolution of the King**

**The Problem** We recall that Jesus has gone over to the land of the Gentiles to get away from the crowds in the Promised Land. The pharisees (法利赛人) and the Herodians (希律一党的人) were after Jesus, to be sure; Jesus was for them public enemy number 1. Jesus was a threat to their social power and religious conviction (信念). See the truth never can stand the lie. The lie ultimately has not lasting power over the truth. (I know that sounds unreasonable in Canada and Scarborough/GTA where it seems the devil and his minions 爪牙, 奴才 have their hands in everything) but trust that the darkness cannot snuff out (消除) the light. God has a plan to establish His Kingdom and the Pharisees and Herodians, Pilate and the howling (嚎叫的) Jews would all be unknowing pawns (棋子) in the Father's plan.

Jesus knew all about His Father's plans. Jesus knew of the impending doom and darkness of Golgotha, but Jesus also knew of His resurrection, the coming Holy Spirit and the era of Christ and the Church all over the world even as it is now! Jesus was preparing the 12 for the task and so headed away to prepare for His looming crucifixion (被钉十字架) in

His own way and time and to prepare the 12 in a quieter place. So, Jesus after making clear to the Pharisees and the people as a Shepherd who had compassion for the sheep made clear that it was not that went into a man that made him unclean, but what came out of a man. Lust and lewdness (淫荡), greed, malice (恶意) and slander (Mark 7:20-23) that made a man unclean. So, Jesus goes to the Gentiles and the Gentiles are considered unclean by the Jews. But as the Syro Phoenician (腓尼基人) pointed out the crumbs from the bread for the children of Israel was enough to feed the dogs of the Gentiles. So, Jesus set out to make clear to the 12 and to those Gentile readers in Rome who first read or heard this book and now us too. It was always the plan of God that Jew and Gentile would live side by side in the church of Jesus Christ.

The crowds had been with Jesus some three days and the food ran out and Jesus with compassion knew they were hungry. From Mark 7:31 and following we read about the deaf and stammering (口吃的) man whom Jesus healed. There we read that Jesus sighed before he healed that man. We saw then to it was not only a sigh of sympathy but empathy. Jesus not only the man was suffering but felt sadness for the man. He felt for the man. The man was suffering because of sin. Jesus understands.

When God created us, we read in Genesis 1 and 2 that God gave all the fruit of the trees and plants for Adam and Eve, the first people to eat. We read in Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve disobeyed God and fell under judgement and the curse of sin,

***Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil (劳苦) you will eat food from it all the days of your life.***

Hunger is now a part of life and part of the effects of sin. Mankind must try and ought to try to relieve the poor and hungry of the suffering but in the end only God can really do that. He will do that and is doing that through the death and resurrection of His beloved Son. When the Kingdom of God is fully established here on earth, sin, sickness and hungry will truly be a thing of the past! God had plans to restore the creation and redeem a people and Jesus would give His life on Calvary's tree to restore the creation. Jesus did this because of His compassion as our great High Priest (大祭司) who sympathizes with us in every pain and sorrow!

Jesus called to the 12. Jesus reveals His heart. Jesus does not want these folks to go home hungry and exhausted. Have the 12 forgotten that Jesus fed 5,000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish just weeks ago? Or do they just state the obvious. They know that not only can they not feed these 4,000 people but there is no store or market even close by. They truly are in a desolate (荒凉的) place.

Jesus does not rebuke them. But still Jesus is calling them and by that calling to them—us too. He calls the shepherds in training to compassion and have a shepherd's heart. But he also calls them to remember and believe. He calls them to trust. No, they are correct, they cannot possibly take care of those at least 4,000 folks but Jesus can. Jesus will.

**The Resolution** How many loaves? There are seven. Jesus gives thanks and blesses that bread and then the 12 go out serve that bread to the people whom Jesus has asked to sit down. 4,000 men and like twice that in terms of woman and children are fed. Jew and Gentile sitting there in the wilderness blessed by the Word. Jesus is the Word. When Elijah brought the Word to Zarephath the widow was blessed. When Joseph came to Egypt, Egypt and the whole Middle East was blessed and overcame as famine (饥荒). When Moses brought the Word Israel was fed with manna (吗哪) in the wilderness. We look forward then to the Upper Room where Jesus blesses the bread and breaks it and institutes the Lord's Supper (圣餐). Yes, Jew and Gentile will celebrate the Lord's Supper because that is what happens when the Word of God comes!

Perhaps for the sake of the Gentiles Jesus gives a second blessing over the fish—a special word here is used to refer to sardines of the sort the Gentiles use—and the fish are torn apart and all have their fill. Now we have a taste of what Isaiah saw some 700 years earlier:

***On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud (覆盖之物) that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.*** (Isaiah 25:6-8)

Do you see any one there in the wilderness eating bread in the sweat of their face! No Jesus has given them bread. He is the Good Shepherd (好牧人) and He is the Messiah (弥赛亚, 受膏者) and we are called to trust Him. He will come again and there will that time when He will eat of the bread and drink of the vine- the best wine and death will be gone, and all the sorrow of human prejudice (偏见) gone and then the words will be brought to full completion even as we worship in our little part of the Holy Catholic Church (圣而公之教会) :

***The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.*** (Acts 2:29)

And

***Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" (未受割礼的) by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility***

(Ephesians 2:12-14)

Yes, Jesus really is the Messiah! By His death and resurrection, we now in the Supper of the Lord receive His feeding by Word and Spirit the one who is the bread of life. We serve Him now in His task. Let us love as He has loved us and let us trust in Him. We have hope now for the future rooted in our faith in the past. We remember, and we believe. So, we are filled with love! Repent and believe for the kingdom of God is at hand. Amen