



Blessing and Brokenness.

Jacob at the Jabbok Genesis 32.22-31

The feeding of the 5000. Matthew 14.13-21

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there 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.

Blessings. A reflection by Revd Penny Joyce.

I took my campervan to be serviced and had the use of a hire car for the day. To my surprise the radio had been tuned to a Christian radio station. My first reaction was surprise that this had happened....as I am sure that this is quite unusual. Yet the person before me had obviously been a Christian or searching for faith which greatly encouraged me, so I continued to listen.

What was being discussed was the importance of recognising God at work in our lives and the communities in which we live. When we do that the speaker said, we will begin to recognise him more and more as he blesses our lives and the lives of others. That is so true in the world we live in at present. Out of the horrors of the pandemic have come many blessings such as greater family unity, many acts of kindness, neighbourliness, love and sacrifice. People have found that the things that they thought were so crucial to the quality of their lives are actually artificial. They have had time during lock down, to re-assessed what really truly matters. Indeed many are engaging with God at this time, and the joy is that he hears them, and pours out his blessings on them.

Beauty for brokenness
 Hope for despair
 Lord, in the suffering
 This is our prayer
 Bread for the children
 Justice, joy, peace
 Sunrise to sunset
 Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives
 Cures for their ills
 Work for the craftsman
 Trade for their skills
 Land for the dispossessed
 Rights for the weak
 Voices to plead the cause
 Of those who can't speak

God of the poor
Friend of the weak
Give us compassion we pray
Melt our cold hearts
Let tears fall like rain
Come, change our love
From a spark to a flame

Refuge from cruel wars
 Havens from fear
 Cities for sanctuary
 Freedoms to share
 Peace to the killing-fields
 Scorched earth to green
 Christ for the bitterness
 His cross for the pain

Rest for the ravaged earth
 Oceans and streams
 Plundered and poisoned
 Our future, our dreams
 Lord, end our madness
 Carelessness, greed
 Make us content with
 The things that we need

Lighten our darkness
 Breathe on this flame
 Until your justice
 Burns brightly again
 Until the nations
 Learn of your ways
 Seek your salvation
 And bring you their praise

Graham Kendrick 1993
 Make Way Music

In our New Testament reading, Jesus leaves the demanding crowds and takes a boat across the lake to a place of quiet. So keen are the people to hear what he has to say to them that they follow him to be blessed and healed. So instead of rest when gets across the lake he finds the crowds waiting.

Instead of turning them away we find that '...he had compassion on them and cures the sick....' Jesus is by nature a man of compassion.

The practically minded disciples realise that the people are hungry and there are no sources of food.....no McDonalds on this hillside! Jesus uses this opportunity to raise their faith levels. The disciples know that the 5 loaves and 2 fishes that they did locate, would not be enough to feed the huge numbers that had gathered. Yet Jesus blesses the loaves and fishes and they are distributed and everyone has enough. Of course those who have been brought up with the story know that the 5 loaves and 2 fish do feed the people and there are twelve baskets of crumbs left over, an indication of Gods incredible abundance to all. Gods power through the Holy Spirit can make the 'impossible'.... possible.

We glimpse at the fact that there is 'spiritual food' to be had as we journey with Jesus.

Three questions we might like to ask ourselves are.....

1. Have I known and recognised God's blessing in my life recently?
2. Have I felt Jesus' presence in times of brokenness and pain?
3. Am I prepared to share with others the 'Good News' of faith in Jesus?

I do hope the answer to all three questions, is yes!

Penny Joyce

Hymn Reflection MGS

Look at this week's suggested theme, and you think, "Ah! *Beauty for brokenness*", one of Graham Kendrick's hymns from the 1950's. But let's go back to Charles Wesley's hymn based directly on today's first reading. One of the most beautiful hymns ever written. Read (or sing) the words slowly and thoughtfully, and pass confidently from misery and despair to a kind of gentle ecstasy. The word "love" can rarely have been used in a more eloquent context. It is like an upmarket, personal, version of Wesley's better-known *And can it be*, which is equally wonderful and ecstatic to sing, but in a more extrovert style.

And what about the tune, *David's Harp*. It seems to have been pre-ordained to help make this such a wonderful hymn. It was published in a book called *The Divine Companion* when Wesley was two years old, and then forgotten for two hundred years. There are no known biographical details of the composer, Robert King, apart from his dates (1676 - 1713). But when Ralph Vaughan Williams was compiling the English Hymnal in 1906 he found both words and tune, matched them together and produced a gem.

1 Come, O thou Traveller unknown,
whom still I hold, but cannot see;
my company before is gone,
and I am left alone with thee;
with thee all night I mean to stay,
and wrestle till the break of day.

2 I need not tell thee who I am,
my misery of sin declare;
thyself hast called me by my name;
look on thy hands, and read it there!
But who, I ask thee, who art thou?
Tell me thy name, and tell me now.

3 In vain thou strugglest to get free;
I never will unloose my hold.
Art thou the man that died for me?
The secret of thy love unfold:
wrestling, I will not let thee go,
till I thy name, thy nature know.

4 Yield to me now, for I am weak,
but confident in self-despair;
speak to my heart, in blessings speak,
be conquered by my instant prayer.
Speak, or thou never hence shall move,
and tell me if thy name is Love.

5'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me!
I hear thy whisper in my heart!
The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
pure universal Love thou art:
to me, to all, thy mercies move;
thy nature and thy name is Love.