

Sermon Summary
7th after Pentecost
31 July 2011

- Our reading of miracles suffers in two regards. Firstly, we become overly pre-occupied with the “how” of the miracles. For many, a literal understanding at Sunday School becomes an intolerable intellectual burden in later youth or adulthood, and may even lead to a rejection of the Gospel.
- Secondly, we often meet the miracles in isolation when they are read as bite-sized ‘stand-alone’ sections in church. As such we lose details from the narrative flow of the gospels which assist us to look for what we should always have aimed: the significance, or “what” rather than the “how” of the miracle.
- Let us look at the significance of the miracle of the feeding of the 4000 (Mt 14:13-21).
- It presents Jesus feeding people in the wilderness and thus presents him in the place of a new Moses.
- It also shows him as exemplifying the characteristics of leadership (good shepherds) demanded in Ezekiel 34.
- Does this seem too far-fetched? Consider that Matthew has placed this miracle immediately after the banquet held by Herod Antipas at which Salome dances and John the Baptist is murdered (Mt. 14:1-12). A stark contrast between the leadership of Jesus and the rulers of his time....a contrast which is made explicit in his teaching about servant leadership.
- There is much in here to brood on in regard to politics and the demands of leadership.
- A further point occurs at the end of the miracle at a stage where we often feel that we know the story and glide over the surface rather than continue to pay attention.
- We are told of the care with which the remnants are gathered up by the disciples. Do we exercise similar care in our stewardship of the many gifts which we are given by God? My mind is irrevocably drawn to those news broadcasts which show how much rubbish is left on Sydney streets when New Year is celebrated. How often is our treatment of God’s gifts close to that than the care exercised by the disciples?

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