

SERMON

John 6:1-15

The Great Banquet

Nunawading and Waverley, 25-7-21

Dear friends in Christ,

I love to eat and often when I have finished dinner, I will be thinking of what I am going to eat at breakfast! Such is our obsession with food, we have made eating into an art, with Michelin star-rated chefs and cooking competitions on television. And we have a lot of food. Australia can feed over 60 million people from its arable and grazing lands.

Our Lord Jesus demonstrated how abundantly and generously he provides for us. When he fed **5,000 people**, and that was just counting the men, from **five barely loaves and two fish**, he certainly revealed his majestic power. He was like his Father, the Creator of this universe. He was able to fashion atoms and molecules and create a huge meal from virtually nothing. With his power to multiply, he also revealed his love of abundance. There was so much food there that there were **12 baskets of scraps left over**.

The meal points to the great heavenly banquet when all believers from ages past gather at the resurrection and feast in the presence of God in joy. There, providing for their every need, and serving them like a loving mother, will be our Lord Jesus. And like our earthly feasts, this will be a time of happiness and laughter and great love for each other and our Lord.

Returning to this wonderful miracle or sign, notice, that Jesus fed every person in the huge crowd. There would have been people present who trusted in him, loved him and revered him as their Saviour but there would have been others who were politically minded and were looking for an earthly king. Still others were there as spectators, gawking at all the entertainment. Why didn't the Lord be more selective in whom he invited to his great banquet? We know the answer: he had compassion on them without discrimination. No matter how they felt about him, he would love them. They had **come to him** and he was going to be their host. Our Lord welcomed all; he

offered to everyone an invitation to enter his kingdom by grace, as a great and undeserved favour to them.

Today, Jesus is welcoming you and me. It is not only the call to put one's life and future into his hands and believe. It is also a welcome to share in his life, to be his friend and live in fellowship with him. The great banquet is not about gorging but sharing in our Master's joy, his joy over us. We are his glory because he has won us to himself. We are objects of his success and his prized possessions. The great banquet, then, is about him, being near him and rejoicing in our Lord's company.

We sense also that this meal that took place near the shores of Lake of Galilee is pointing to something deeply spiritual, to a sacramental union with our Lord through bread and through wine. **He broke the bread** into fragments to share with all and after our Lord ascended into heaven, the early Christians referred to the holy sacrament as **the breaking of bread**.

Finally, the great banquet points to how our lives will, one day, be full and complete. We experience so much frustration in our lives, of sometime being inadequate to the task, of dreams being unmet, of things made difficult by others yet in the great banquet there is the realisation of eternal peace. Psalm 23 states that the heavenly **shepherd who makes us to lie down in green pastures**. When Jesus fed the 5,000, the family groups **lay down to eat on the abundant grass** in comfort and **they had as much as they could eat**. For just a moment, their lives were complete and full as ours will be in the eternal banquet. It is a picture of complete peace and fullness of life.

Jesus feeds, as the Robin Mann song says to us: 'Feed us now bread of life, in this holy meal.' Jesus feeds and we ought to trust that he will feed us. He tested the disciples on this point by commanding them, **you feed them** and they failed; **we don't have the money**, was their reply. All he asks of us is that we start with what we have. All they had was a boy's lunch but Jesus made it into a great banquet. Our role in life is to be hospitable, to open our lives to others and share what we have in love for we want to point people to a great banquet our Lord is preparing for us.