

MARK 6:30-44
THE SAVIOUR WHO SATISFIES

What do you need most in life? Let's imagine that we're conducting a survey, one of these people with clipboards in the street and you've been brave enough to stop to answer their questions. They only have two questions: first of all, what do you need most in life? Then secondly, how can the Church help you meet that need? We would all have a different answer to the first question: it might be some big issue you want to solve:

- What is life all about?
- What is my identity – I've just retired and life has been taken up with work; it is finished now and I'm struggling to work out my new role in life?
- I live alone and feel isolated – where can I find new friends to meet and have a sense of community?
- Life is a mess and I feel simply helpless and harassed – where can I find order and shape to life, with peace and forgiveness?
- I sense that there is more to life than what I eat and drink; there must be more than simply having a good time, because the morning after feels so lousy; I'm not sure about God, but there must be something – how can I find out?

These are some of the big questions that people are asking today. Some of these are huge issues of life and faith, of understanding ourselves and God. There are questions about which the Bible has an enormous amount to say, but the tragedy is that many people don't see the Church as a place to find answers to these questions. We can answer question one well enough, but question two about how the church can help – many don't see the connection! Yet, we have access to the one person who is the best answer to all of these and who offers the best answers to all of these – Jesus. The gospels present the picture of Jesus as One who is able to do all things, who is a strong and powerful presence in the world, yet someone full of grace and compassion; this combination of power and compassion together shows a person who sees and knows our needs and who is able to do something about them for us, the person of Jesus Christ.

That is certainly the picture that Mark paints in the story of the feeding of the 5000. This is the only miracle story that appears in all four gospels; every gospel writer thought that this was a story that needed to be told because it said something important about Jesus. Jesus and the disciples had tried to find some space on their own to do some kind of debrief after their mission work. But the crowds followed them and Jesus saw the crowd's need and began to teach them about God and faith. It was getting late and the disciples wanted to send crowd away, but Jesus said "*You give...*" (v.37) Eight months' wages is a huge amount of money in anyone's language; it speaks volumes about the size of the crowd. They have only five loaves and two fishes and Jesus sits the crowd down, gives thanks to the Father for the food and then begins to distribute it around. Everyone is fed and there are still twelve basketfuls left over. We are left wondering if only the disciples knew that a miracle had taken place; was the crowd oblivious to what had gone on?

There are two comments in this story that sum up its significance. First of all, Mark tells us this: "*When Jesus...*" (v34) Here was a people wandering, lost and leaderless, not sure what life is all about, or what faith means; they don't know where to find help and grace; they are not cared for spiritually but are left to fend for themselves. His heart went out to them; literally 'his insides moved' with love and compassion for them. I suppose in these circumstances we might have reacted very differently: the people were intruding, were a nuisance, were getting in the way, and

were too demanding; but Jesus reacts with love, compassion and grace, seeing only the people and their needs. If it were 21st century Scotland that Jesus were looking out over, would He see much difference? He would see people troubled by the needs we listed at the beginning, people failed by the Churches at times, by Churches who have been so preoccupied with their internal politics and wrangling or churches that have become so unsure of what faith is all about that they have forgotten mission, and forgotten to teach faith. He would see people who are trying to find meaning, purpose and self-esteem in all kinds of ways and places that don't work, in all sorts of blind alleys. He would see people who are driven to succeed and survive life, people harassed and helpless and Jesus' heart goes out to us all over again. That's what's Jesus is like.

Mark's second comment is equally important: "*They all...*" (v42) It is almost a throwaway line, but is actually most significant. Why does Mark tell this story? He wants people to know what Jesus is like and what Jesus can do. He wants people to see that Jesus is the Messiah, and that He is a great Saviour. He wants people to see Jesus as One in whom to believe and trust because of what He is able to do. He can feed 5000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish; He can satisfy people who are hungry! Because He can feed the hungry with food, He is a Saviour who is able to do all that we need. Here is a picture of people who were hungry, late in the day, wondering where they would find their supper, going away full up, content and satisfied; their needs have been met by Jesus. Let's go back to the place we started: what is your greatest need? Jesus can meet it; it is simple but true. No matter what it is that we need, Jesus is able to help us; no matter how big the question is, He is able to show us the way and give us the answer; He is able to satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts and minds. "*They all...*" (v.42)

He "is able..." (Eph 3:20a) "He is able..." (Heb 7:25) "He is able..." (Rom 16:25a) He "is able..." (Jude 24) "He is able..." (2 Tim 1:12) "He is able..." (Heb 2:18) 6 New Testament references that all tell us what Jesus is able to do.

This is Jesus and the people went away satisfied; He was someone who saw their needs, who felt for them and who was able to do something about it. He hasn't changed; He still has the same compassion, His heart goes out to us; the same power is still at work in us and in the world to satisfy our deepest needs and to bless us and the world. In the Communion service we share bread and wine to remember Jesus: we remember all over again the things that Jesus did, his stories and above all His death and resurrection; we remember that Jesus is the Saviour who satisfies the deepest needs of our hearts and minds. Discover that or rediscover that; find new faith in Him or renew that faith.