

Sermon preached by Rev Chris Moroney at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral,
Sydney on Wednesday 21st February 2007. Reading: Mark 6:30-56
Topic: "Satisfaction"

People look for satisfaction in life in all sorts of places.

For John it was with his company. He had a business plan, good health, a huge loan and a lot of enthusiasm. He was determined to make his first million dollars by the time he was 30 years old. But even when it happened he did not feel any sense of peace or contentment. So he worked even harder, but that meant he spent less time at home with his family. By the age of 35 his marriage had broken up and he was starting to find comfort in drinking himself drunk before falling asleep. He could not find any peace of mind.

For Shauna it was in the family that she worked so hard to find her reason for living. Her husband was well cared for and loving towards her. The children knew they had a devoted mother. Shauna cooked and washed and cleaned up after them, took them places and listened to all their ups and downs. But when the children left home and started living on their own, it was not the same buzz in the house anymore. Shauna became restless and needed to find excitement in her life. Her husband started to complain that he was not being looked after very well. Sometimes he had to cook his own meals and iron his own shirts. But Shauna just liked going out to her club, and to her groups more and more. She would take up one course after another, looking for something that would truly satisfy her and take away the aching void created by the children leaving home. Shauna remains dissatisfied with life. Augustine once said: "Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee."

Although he lived in the 4th Century he was someone who had known the search for meaning and significance in a variety of sexual encounters and changing relationships.

He settled down to a life of peace and stability and sexual purity when he came to repent of his sins and put his faith in Jesus. And that happened after many years of faithful prayer by his own mother. His mother had actually died before seeing her son come to the Lord and go on to become a great theologian, writer and bishop in the church. The fundamental image behind the feeding of the five thousand is one of satisfaction. Only Jesus is able to meet our deepest needs for significance and meaning in life. **Do you believe that?**

The world and the devil will tell us that we can have it through buying things. They want us to shop till we drop, to be thrilled with a new purchase, to be better off than we were with the latest and the greatest gadget. Advertising is often meant to give us that sense of discontent, of regret, the feeling that we are missing out on something.

But we all know that as soon as we make a purchase, the feeling of excitement does not last. The car gets scratched, the lounge pulls a thread, the dress becomes old fashioned. Jesus is using the imagery of the food to talk about himself being the bread of life, the spiritual sustenance that we all really crave for. We are meant to be able to say "He is my everything."

1 The Feeding of the Five Thousand

- People gather around Jesus

(V 6:30-33) we read about the crowds coming to Jesus.

The disciples are called apostles in the verse 30 because they had just come back from the mission to the people of Israel. They had moved around to various places calling upon people to repent, to turn away from their sins, seek God's forgiveness and strive to live to please Him. They had been proclaiming the coming Kingdom of God and the coming King who is Jesus. With all that publicity we should not be surprised that lots of people went out of their way to come and see Jesus and see what he had to say.

Jesus and his team were getting away from it all and having a debriefing session. On the way there are some people who recognize him. They tell other people. And before you know it there are lots of people walking out into no man's land. I imagine that this was very much like a crowd of people making their way down to Garden Island to see Queen Mary 2 yesterday. There was a special reason which grew a great crowd. And the urgency was such that no-one had thought to bring a back pack or to put in their little lunch or their big lunch. And Remember, this is in the days before they had McDonalds on every corner.

- **Jesus has compassion for them**

(V 34) is especially important because it picks up the feelings or motivation of Jesus.

He was deeply moved, in his bowels, so to speak.

You know when things have been difficult for you how you can feel sick to the stomach.

This is not Jesus taking a casual glance. This is not looking out of the corner of your eye and pretending not to notice someone in need.

This is looking, gazing, staring even and taking it all in. He sees their helplessness.

They are like sheep without a shepherd. They do not know what is good for them.

They would be so easily led astray, taken in by false teachers, by wolves in sheep's clothing. This verse is taking up the theme of Ezekiel 34 where God condemns the false shepherds who fleece the sheep for their own advantage. Jesus comes as the good Shepherd, trustworthy and true. He has the best interests of the sheep, of God's people at heart. ON that basis, he spends time teaching them the word of God. Let me assure everyone here tonight that the love of Jesus is just the same for you. He sees you with your own particular needs. He understands your struggles and mine. He cares for each one of us, deeply, personally and completely. He wants only what is best for us. He knows what is best for us, for every individual here tonight. Jesus wants to be your best friend and your guide through life, your life coach.

Will you let Jesus care for you?

Will we listen to what he has to say to us in His word? Will we come to Him, just as we are, in believing prayer and trust? May we never feel that we are too old or so well taught that we no longer need to listen to Jesus. Such thinking can only be from the evil one.

- **Jesus provides the food they need (V34)**

Just like a lot of preachers, Jesus loses track of time, and the people don't seem to mind. It can be like that with some preachers. You just get caught up with what they are saying, they have such a sense of urgency, and way with words. When they have finished you wonder where the time went. The disciples are thinking practically. The people are hungry. We are a long way from the shops. Jesus puts them to the test. It is not just a practical test, it is a theological test. What can you do for them? Answer: Not much. They go and look to their own resources and come up with Five bread rolls and a couple of fish. This is probably someone's lunch! What is that going to do with so many?

The bottom line is that Jesus is going to show them what he is really like.

He is going to reveal his character, at least to his disciples. Not everyone else will know what is going on. But the disciples would certainly have a lot to chew over after the feeding of the 5000. After all they collected up twelve baskets of broken pieces, leftover.

Whether they used the pieces as food for themselves or burley for the fish over the next few days, each disciple had his own reminder of the power and the person of Jesus. The remarkable thing is there in verse 42 "They all ate and were satisfied" For the person with the Old Testament background, there is an echo of the situation of Moses and the people of God in the desert. They too were hungry. God provided special food for them called manna. It was like white bread with honey.

That was what kept the people going in the desert for 40 years. The bread of heaven. Now Jesus is giving the people food enough to eat, in a supernatural way. He is pointing to himself as the

New Moses, taking God's people on a second Exodus, into the New Promised Land of a better relationship with God. In John's gospel he tells the people that he is the bread of life and that people should believe in him as the one from God who will sustain them to eternal life.

- Jesus is what they really need

Although it is not nearly as obvious as all that in Mark's gospel, it is clear to us as the readers, the one with insight into the minds of the disciples, that Jesus is the Special God/man who alone is able to bring satisfaction and wholeness and healing into our lives. What do you think of Jesus?

2 Walking on the Water

I have to say that there are some parts of the Bible that are not altogether clear or straightforward in my understanding. This would have to be one such case. But part of what we are meant to understand is that Jesus does not have to explain everything that he does to us or to us disciples. Jesus takes himself off to pray up on the mountain. Even Jesus needs time alone with God. Surely that is true for us as well. And the busier we are, the more we need to spend time in prayer. I need to do that, and so does each one of us. Here at the Healing Ministry we certainly believe in the importance of prayer and the power of prayer. We gather together to pray for one another. We should also be spending time on our own praying to God, for ourselves, for one another, always giving thanks to the Lord for all his mercies to us.

- **The disciples are in trouble**

The disciples, seasoned fishermen, are doing it tough on the stormy surface of the Sea of Galilee. Remember there are 12 of them, in one fishing boat. This boat is not nearly as big as the Queen Mary 2. It is hard to think of the QE2 ever getting into trouble at sea, but that may have been something that someone once said about another big boat called the Titanic, a ship that was owned by the same firm that owns the QE2, but that another story. In verse 48 they were making headway painfully.

- **Jesus is passing by**

Deep into the night, there is Jesus, walking past. See you at the beach. They are really worried. They cry out. They think it is a ghost. Terrified. Who is this Jesus?

- **“Do not be afraid”**

He calls out a word of comfort: “Take heart it is I. Do not be afraid.” Jesus is the Son of God. He is in control of the universe that was created in him and through him. When he steps into the boat, it all goes calm straight away. That is miraculous. Even after a storm passes through Sydney the seas are still quite high for a week or two.

They should have had more clues. After all, they had seen what he had done with the loaves. You should expect Jesus to do God-like things, because he is the Son of God with the authority of God. But, their hearts were hardened. They say that you can take a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. You can show some people all the facts about Jesus, you can share your testimony with them about what the Lord has done for you, you can talk about the historical facts of the gospel, Jesus' death and resurrection, but it is not until God's Holy Spirit breaks through into people's lives that they come to faith in Jesus, as the Son of God.

3 The Healing of the Sick

Our third section deals with another mark of the power of Jesus. Power over the physical and spiritual needs of the people. Power over the wind and the waves. Now we see power over sickness. Who do you think Jesus really is? Jesus is the one with all authority.

- **They recognized him**

First of all they saw him and recognized him as Jesus, from Nazareth, God's specially appointed King, the Messiah bringing in the New Age of the Spirit. The signs of his coming we break through of the power of God and the turning back of the power of the Devil.

This is not just a wink and nod of recognition. By the way, saw Jesus the other day. You know the way we might do that if we see someone famous in the shops. Guess what, I say Nick Greiner the other day in David Jones. This was recognition that led to action. And the news spread like a bush fire. And the people moved like lightning. (V 6:54-56) What a contrast to the response Jesus received in his own home town. (V 6:5) People came from far and wide to find the healing touch of Jesus. You would know when this Son of God would pass this way again. This was the time for action. His power was on the move.

- **He healed them (V56)**

There should be no doubt about Jesus. His is here to throw back the power of Satan, to set people free from the influence and dominion of evil forces. Ultimately, his power is seen in the cross. By his death and resurrection he finally defeated the power of the Devil in terms of eternal judgement and condemnation. It does not necessarily follow that all those who put their faith in Jesus to heal them actually became committed followers of the Lord Jesus.

The same is true today. There have been people who have known the healing power of God and have not yet become Christians. It is a sign of God's great grace and favour that he should do such a thing. But it is a great shame and a greater tragedy that someone should know the healing power of God in their lives and yet still not know the saving power of God in their lives at the same time. We believe that God always hears our prayers. Jesus Christ has opened the way to eternal life and opened the life line between us and God. He welcomes our prayer and he loves to answer our prayers in powerful and wonderful ways.