

Weekly Gospel Readings

The 3rd Sunday of Epep

The Lord Feeds the 5 Thousand

Today (07/23/2023) is the Third Sunday of the Blessed month of Epep, and on this blessed day the Church reads [Luke 9:10-17](#). In these verses the apostles returned from their mission ([Luke 9:1-6](#)) to tell Him all they had done. Jesus sought to spend time with them in private ([v. 10](#)). But the crowds followed them and “He welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing”([Luke 9:11](#)). As the day began to wear away and the disciples came telling Him to send the crowd away into the town to find food and shelter for, they had none there. Christ then told them to give the people something to eat, but the twelve responded and said “We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people”([Luke 9:13](#)). Christ told the disciples to make them sit down in groups of fifty and “He looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them”([Luke 9:16](#)) and gave to the disciples to feed them and they were satisfied and had twelve baskets of remaining fragments.

Of all of the miracles which are recorded during the ministry of Jesus, only one is described in all four gospel accounts. It is the account of Jesus Feeding the Five Thousand with five loaves and two fish. This was an especially significant miracle. It was significant because it involved the greatest number of people, and it had the most eyewitnesses.

The disciples manifest a sincere concern for the crowd’s well-being, realizing that they are in a remote location with limited access to food and shelter. They suggest to Jesus that He should send the people away. “Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place”([Luke 9:12](#)). However, Jesus puzzles them with an unexpected answer: “You give them something to eat.” ([v. 13](#)). The Disciples with only five loaves of bread and two fish on hand, hardly enough to feed such a large gathering: “We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.”

Here the disciples assumed that feeding the multitudes needed plenty of money, but they still did not understand that the food for the believers is not to be purchased, but Christ knows how to provide us with redemption, and with a free banquet according to St. Ambrose. Nevertheless, Jesus instructs them to have the people sit down in groups, and then “taking the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd” ([v.16](#)) The Lord miraculously multiplies the five loaves and two fish to feed the entire crowd of about five thousand men, plus women and children, “And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces” ([v.17](#)).

This miraculous feeding of the multitude illustrates Jesus' divine power and compassion. He demonstrates His ability to provide for the needs of the people, both physically and spiritually. The twelve baskets of leftovers that the disciples collect emphasize the abundance of God's provision and the overflow of blessings. As per St. Theophylact of Ohrid it also illustrates a liturgical parallel; here Christ first healed and spoke of the gospel, and then fed the multitude with the miraculous bread by the hands of His disciples. Similarly, in the Church, a person is first healed through baptism; then at the Liturgy, the gospel is preached, and the bread of life and the cup are received from the hands of the ordained priests.

May God allow us to always seek His gifts and the food that He gives us so we may have the Physician of our souls and bodies dwell in us and heal us. Let us pray that we may have the faith to surrender ourselves to God's plans, trusting that He will provide and multiply our efforts beyond our imagination.

Sources:

- Commentaries on the Gospel of St. Luke by Father Tadros Malaty
- Bible: English Standard Version <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+9%3A10-17&version=ESV>