

Date: August 6, 2022

Subject: 8th Sunday After Pentecost

My Dear Brothers and Sisters In Christ:

I hope that you are able to enjoy the last days of summer with autumn just several weeks away.

MATTHEW 14: 14-22

And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

He said, Bring them hither to me.

And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

Once again, we see Jesus performing an act of love through an amazing miracle. However, we sometimes also see Jesus refusing to do miracles when asked. For example, the Pharisees pestered Him to perform a miracle, to which the Savior replied: *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it.* What motivated Jesus to perform miracles, and why did He sometimes refuse?

Jesus granted people His miraculous help when there was a genuine need for it. He always refused to do miracles simply for show, to satisfy idle curiosity. In the above case, the miracle was appropriate because the recipients of His help had stayed with Him, listening with such rapt attention the entire day to His teachings that they did not feel hunger and ate nothing during the whole time. Therefore, He, moved by compassion, decided that they should be fed before sending them away.

But Jesus said unto them (the apostles). They need not depart; give ye them to eat. Being God, Jesus knew, of course, that the crowd numbered over five thousand people. He also knew that there was not enough food to accomplish what He was instructing the apostles to do. As God, He did not need their assistance. Then why did He order them to do it? The answer is that He was teaching them a lesson in the importance of showing compassion and aiding one's neighbor in need.

Seeing the devotion that the crowd had for the Savior and their amazing eagerness to hear God's word should make us ask ourselves: how devoted and eager are we to hear and learn God's teachings? These teachings are given to us in the Gospel and are essential for our salvation. Yes, we listen to the Gospel read in Church. But how often do we pick up the Gospel and read it at home? Chances are that we do it rarely, or maybe even never. If this is true, we are making it difficult or impossible for us to live in a salvific way.

When the Savior instructed the apostles to help the crowd in their need, He was also directing His words to us. He was reminding us of the second of His two major commandments on love: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. Do we?
We can't be saved if we don't.

The final lesson that this Gospel passage is giving us is confirming the following instruction given by the Savior in His Sermon on the Mount: *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.*

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, We are always so preoccupied with the pursuit of the things that we think we need, that we often find no time for the pursuit of our spiritual needs and concerns. Spiritual literature is very low or absent from our reading lists. We put off works of charity until sometime in the future, because we are not yet financially secure enough to afford to be charitable. We think that way because we forget that it is not we that control our destiny. Without God we are unable to accomplish anything.

Thank God that our loving Savior understands our predicament and has great mercy and compassion. He wants to save us and offers us this incredible opportunity. Therefore, let us make our main concern in life our spiritual improvement and trust in God to keep His promises. He always does!

With Much Love in Christ,
Archpriest Serge Kotar