

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY; BCP EUCHARIST 2020.

The miracle of the loaves and the fishes must have made a considerable impact on the early church for it is reported in all four gospels. But would it have made such an impact if the early church thought about it like many Christians think about it today? Let me explain. Rather than concede that in some way Jesus performed an action that was consistent with Him being God who brought the universe into being and holds it in existence and seeks the redemption of all creation by means that are beyond our analytical and need to know minds, some prefer to say that what actually Jesus did was encourage others to share what they had, or that it is just a metaphor for drawing out the meaning of the Eucharist. In other words it was something explainable and for want of a better word devoid of the supernatural.

C.S.Lewis echoing the sound theology of the Church, sees the incarnation, God becoming man, as the Grand Miracle, the miracle for which every miracle had prepared for or exhibits or results from. So it follows that those who deny such things as the miraculous and would rather explain them away usually abandon other doctrines of the church. It is a slippery slope. God descends into the experience and life of humanity in order to take it back again into the Kingdom which He does in His death, resurrection and glorious ascension. Isn't it more than probable that at moments in His ministry the kingdom would come flooding through and raise creation up at that moment, prior to its final consummation, a foretaste of the type of life that awaits us all.

This is what St Augustine was trying to explain in order to justify the miraculous without falling into the trap of making God arbitrary, making things happen for some and not for others. He saw the miraculous as natural processes just speeded up a bit. Following on from this former Archbishop Rowan Williams postulates that what can make the natural process speed up is the presence of an especially holy life. It is this sort of life, one that imitates the life of Christ, that allows the Kingdom to rush in, that opens the door to the Kingdom just that little bit more. That still doesn't mean that where miracles are prayed for and don't seem to happen, that those lives are any less holy or less deserving. It might mean, apart from the fact that we will never know all the facts of a life amongst the facts of other lives in relation to God's vision,

that for some, rather than experiencing just a glimpse of the life to come through the miraculous, the whole of the Kingdom is to be given.

We associate holy lives in particular with those we know to be Saints. And one of the criteria for establishing Sainthood is the observation, recording and scrutiny by professionals that at least two miracles have taken place. So it follows, which is quite astounding, that from Pius X in the beginning of the 20th century to Pope Francis there have been 1653 men and women canonised. That equates to 3306 miracles, confirmed, scrutinised and documented. And they are the ones that are looked into. It begins with the incarnation, it flows back to creation, forward through loaves and fishes and on into the lives of ordinary people, right now.

AMEN.