

26 Jul 2015 Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

2 Samuel 11:1-15
Psalm 14
Ephesians 3: 14-21
John 6:1-21

[Proper 12B/Ordinary 17B/Pentecost 9 July 26, 2015](#) Textweek

We could begin today with a judgemental analysis of David from the first reading, exploring the rights and wrongs in the story of David and Bathsheba.

However, having been asked last week why we rarely explore the psalm; we'll begin with today's psalm; and it is a somewhat sobering start as the writer seems to condemn the whole of humanity;

*"2 The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of Adam:
to see if there were any who would act wisely and seek after God.*

*3 But they have all turned out of the way, they have all alike become corrupt:
there is none that does good, no not one."*

And that is a worldview that we've probably all experienced at times; and for many it is worldview that comes into our foreground again and again as we watch the news and see various acts of terror that seem to occur almost every day;

"4 Are all the evildoers devoid of understanding.....

5 They shall be struck with terror: for God is with the company of the righteous."

The psalm is a lament, a winge, that everyone and everything is not right; *"there is none that does good, no not one."*

It is a voice of despair, grief, depression; and also a voice of self-righteousness for the writer does not seem to be included in the "they" that have *"all alike become corrupt"*. It is perhaps helpful for us to know and acknowledge that part of our own inner landscape from which we too can hold that same one-sided perspective of hopelessness.

Thankfully, in the story of David from the first reading we have the contrast of Uriah; and that enables us to see two sides of the story; it gives two worldviews; and that in turn enables us to appreciate that we also have access within ourselves to quite different perspectives.

So now, jumping to the gospel reading, we can explore John's sense of perspective as he narrates two well-known miracles; but before we seek to locate these miracles in our own lives we should pause to acknowledge what miracles actually are.

At a guess, 80% of today's Church probably think that these two stories actually happened; and so it is also likely that 80% of us also see them as actual events that took place in the life of Jesus.

If that is the case and these are stories of Jesus, then are we denying ourselves the potential of being workers of miracles?

What if, miracles, rather being stunning events are actually a perspective, a seeing of reality beyond what we see?

If we understand the miracle stories as actual actions performed by Jesus then the outcome of that understanding is that we make Jesus into something like a comic book super-hero; and we know that we ourselves are therefore not like him.

The miracles, or signs, of John's gospel are very much illustrative of our Christlikeness; John clearly understood that Jesus was revealing to us who we are, rather than showing off who he is.

And so again, miracles, rather being stunning events are actually a perspective, a seeing of reality beyond what we see?

Exploring the gospel narrative we hear; *"Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. 2 A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. 3 Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples."*

The actual movements in the narrative are significant and there are three in this opening section of the story: *"Jesus went to the other side"*, *"Jesus went up the mountain"* and he *"sat down there"*.

The first two movements indicate a movement into another worldview, that other reality that is to be perceived beyond the obvious; *"the other side of the Sea"* is beyond the chaos of the everyday and *"up the mountain"* invites us to a higher place, together this is a movement into seeing with Divine eyes from the perspective of eternity.

The story is essentially about feeding a large crowd, meeting the needs of everyone and giving life, sustenance to all.

The very first action that follows the initial dialogue, and so the action that initiates the miracle is *"Make the people sit down."*; again this is very significant and we can appreciate that when we remember *"3 Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples."*

So the first action in the narrative of the miracle is to adopt the attitude of Christ; to know ourselves in that very same position.

The unfolding of the story provides us with some enlightenment into the process of making miracles. The disciples are the ones who see the gifts held by a boy, and we can only ponder the question, would the boy have known his potential if it was not seen by others?

Once the gifts are seen, there is however another important step that puts the seeing into action; the boy offers his food for sharing with others; and perhaps this is the very activity of miracles.

The role that Jesus plays is very simple; rather than being superman, he is the one who gives thanks and also the one who serves the food.

The story finishes with the disciples gathering the abundance from those who have been satisfied, gathering even more than all that was given; an understanding that St Francis knew well when he said: 'it is in giving that we receive'.

John's gospel has profound insight, it is not a documentary on the life of Jesus and nor is it a created story to show how Jesus was God's only son; it is a telling of what Jesus revealed about us, and all of humanity.

In the miracle stories we have signs that illustrate a life perspective, and a life orientation that we can choose for ourselves.

Just to underline that this is not a 'making Jesus special' story; John has included a footnote to the story in verses 14 and 15; *"14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." 15 When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself."*

When we want to make Jesus the king of the miracles, then we distance ourselves and withdraw from the Divine reality that this story illustrates.

The only question we need to contemplate as we finish the gospel reading for today, is when are we going to walk on water?

And for that we will need to explore and overcome our fears!