

FAMILY SERVICE - ROTHBURY
3RD AUGUST 2008

Peter Ustinov said, "Charity is more common than compassion. Charity is tax-deductible. Compassion is time consuming." Compassion is all about caring deeply. Today we are going to think about a wonderful act of compassion by Jesus himself.

There they all were. Jesus had been trying to get away from them – but while he took the short cut across the Lake, they walked all the way round. Miles – quite a few miles in the heat. And the day wore on. It was nearly evening. Seeing the need of the crowd for food, Jesus had compassion. He was moved by their need. So he made it possible for all to be fed. The disciples badgered him to do something. Send them away. But Jesus never sends anyone away. Especially those with needs. Instead of giving in to the pressure of his disciples to send people away to get food, he told them to feed the people 'You give them something to eat.' he said.

After a bit, the disciples came to Jesus with five loaves and two fish which Jesus blessed. He then broke them into bits, the disciples handed it all out and everyone was fed. Hey – wow.

Get out the loaves - and then the fish - explain

Five thousand people or more were there on the hillside that day, and they were all fed.

Of course we don't really know what happened and the miracle of the five loaves and two fish going round the crowd may not be as simple as it first seems. It could be that a bit like the sorcerer's apprentice, the bread did actually keep growing every time Jesus touched it. And the fish. Let me give you an explanation for this miracle that many people think is likely to be the right one.

The disciples saw that there were at least some folk there who might not make it all the way home without at least something to see them through. So of course, they asked Jesus. That was the first thing to do. That's always the first thing to do – to take your worries to Jesus.

And Jesus sent them off to see what food there was. Picture the scene - it was getting late and the people were hungry. But **would** they all have set out that morning with no food at all? Surely at least some of

them would have taken something to eat, even if only a little. Was it that, when the disciples asked, everyone pretended they didn't have anything as they wanted it all for their supper? Perhaps they didn't want to share. One lad came out and said in a small voice: I've only got this – but if it's any use . . .

When Jesus blessed the bread and the fish, and the disciples began to take it round the crowd, all those who had brought food began to share it and, before you knew it, everyone had plenty and there was even some left over. The miracle was, maybe, about turning selfish people into compassionate and generous people when touched by the love of Christ.

As we look round the valley, we can see the hogs growing and the cattle, and there is indeed going to be a harvest. But we, who have so much, surely cannot celebrate our plenty without giving more than a thought to all those round about us - like the people on the hillside in the bible reading.

There are so many of our fellow human beings, who have little or nothing, those who today sit beside us in God's world and who will not eat breakfast, lunch or dinner. Those who have no food and no running water; those whose crops have failed because of too much or too little rain. We have so much to thank God for - but perhaps we don't really want to share??

When the disciples came to Jesus he said: **You** give them something to eat.' said Jesus.

Makes you think, doesn't it.

So as we celebrate this wonderful place and all the good things that we have let us give thanks to God for all the everything he has given to us but also let us take seriously the words of Jesus "You give them something to eat."