

St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church
Moore Street, Adelaide

Reflection for the 9th Sunday after Pentecost
Jesus – Unconstrained by Human Rules

The Feeding of the 5,000 is one of Jesus' parables which is extremely well known – at least by those who read the Scriptures. There are many meanings which one can find in it. Here is one of them.

It is significant that Jesus feeds the people in the wilderness. In his time on earth, Jews did not enjoy picnics away from home but always ate at home. Here they were able to keep the rules about proper kosher observance before meals. In the wilderness where Jesus fed the people there was not water for washing one's hands before eating. Again, because of the wilderness location of this meal no one could be sure that adjacent person was kosher. Also the loaves and the fish produced were used by Jesus regardless of whether or not they were kosher and that the required tithes had been paid at the Temple for them.

Every detail of this scene of the feeding in the desert suggests that Jesus shows a studied disregard for the prevailing rules about eating. On this occasion he is applying his own ethos of offering the blessing of food and sustenance to all people regardless of their background or spiritual status. Jesus was unconstrained by human rules. He would not be stopped by rules over acting generously on behalf of all sorts of people.

The Feeding of the 5,000 people enabled God to be bold and novel, impartial and inclusive, in extending favour and blessing in a very big way. Jesus was always 'good news' as he went about his work.

Jesus was never a 'boundary keeper' but instead a 'boundary breaker'. Does this make us wonder about eras in the Church's history when the Church has set up and strongly enforced borders around the benefits of Jesus' gifts to us? Is there any instance of borders in the Church today? Are they helpful in any way or are they a distraction from or barrier to Jesus' teachings and gifts to humankind?

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