

Sermon Date: 07/02/2016

The fifth Sunday of the month of Tobe.

The miracle of feeding the five thousand; from the Gospel of St. John, Chapter 6.

“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

- ❖ This passage of the gospel reading today is called ‘the gospel of blessing’.

Whenever a Coptic month has five Sundays, the church rejoices and reads this passage—‘the gospel of blessing’—because God has blessed this month by granting us another Sunday, another ‘day of the Lord’.

- ❖ When Christ fed the multitude, many people rejoiced and were amazed, for how can five loaves of bread feed and satisfy thousands of people?

The people ate and were filled and followed Christ. But Christ told them, “You follow Me because you ate freely of this bread and were filled; but labour for the food that endures.”¹

The food we eat is the ‘**food that perishes**’; Christ was preparing us to receive “**the food that endures**”, which is His body, the bread He broke for us and said, “This is My body”.²

We can never compare any miracle under heaven to this Grace.

This is the food that endures to everlasting life.

This food is not like any other food that sustains our bodies, for the food we eat becomes our flesh, and gives us energy.

But the True Living Bread from Heaven—the Heavenly Manna that is Christ—we eat it, and Christ changes us to become Him.

So, if we partake of the Eucharist, we are changed; we become Christ.

- ❖ At the end of the passage, we read that Christ tells His disciples to “**Gather up the fragments**”³. Why? Why is it important to gather up the fragments?

We have read this passage many times, but this verse hardly attracts any attention! Christ stressed to His disciples to, “Gather up the fragments so that nothing is lost”.

¹ Jn. 6:26-27

² Mt, 26:26

³ Jn. 6:12

Not a single fragment is to be lost; what an unusual command.

The holy disciples, being obedient to Christ, gathered up the fragments, and filled twelve baskets with them.⁴

How easy it is to lose the fragments; but why were they important to Christ?

When these fragments are gathered up in the treasury of the Church, they become numerous, and very useful.

When the fragments are scattered, they are almost invisible; but when they are gathered, they become visible and very valuable.

This divine commandment still stands today.

When we receive the Eucharist, we become the Body of Christ; and among us, there are many fragments.

Who are they?

The weak, the insignificant, the poor, the uneducated, and the disabled.

Using human sight and understanding, we value people according to their education or status—the Pope, the Bishops, the Priests, and the Deacons in the Church, for example. Even in everyday life, we have Ministers, businesspeople, and the rich.

But there are others many consider insignificant. When we compare a lowly person to a Minister or businessperson, the Minister is always highly respected. What about the downtrodden, the poor, the needy?

This kind of partiality belongs to the world; but for Christ, these fragments are valuable; each fragment is valuable.

‘Gather up the fragments in My Church, for they are very dear to Me’.

Would you believe that Christ used these fragments to feed thousands? That is why they are fragments.

In the early Church, in its inception, the congregation’s spiritual awareness was immature; it was inadequate.

When a rich person entered the Church dressed in gold and expensive attire, the congregation would give them the front seat in the Church.

But if a poor person enters the Church, they do not receive the same honour or attention.⁵

St. James wrote that this conduct should not be practised in the Church.

If you do so, this is partiality.

St. James chastised the congregation for despising the poor.

⁴ Jn. 6:13

⁵ Jam. 2:1-9

So, if the Church lived according to the commandment of Christ, by the Spirit of Christ, the Church would care and value the fragments: the poor, the weak, and the needy.

The Church gathers up the fragments.

Remember the Canaanite woman?

What did she ask Christ for? The “**crumbs** which fall from the masters’ table”.⁶

Christ praised her faith.⁷

“O woman, great is your faith!” (Mt. 15:28)

Never disrespect or despise any person; see everyone through Christ’s eyes; even if they are fragments, weak.⁸

“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones”. (Mt. 18:10)

Sometimes we may think we are wise, or intellectual, judging the little ones as not; this is not of the Church.

“Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees...so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.” (Heb. 12:12-13)

“Uphold the weak, be patient with all”. (1 Thess. 5:14)

This is the gospel; but if we live according to the way of this world, there will always be distinctions; there will be partiality, and the fragments will be despised.

How does Christ see us?

Christ looks at the soul He redeemed.

We ought to ignore what we see on the surface.

Christ sees us through the eyes of divine mercy; especially toward the weak and the sinner.

When the Church lives according to this spirit, the Church becomes beautiful; heavenly. Who is great in the Church? Who is honoured in such a Church?

Those who are filled with the Spirit of God, regardless of their class, appearance, possessions, or education.

The Church is not a building, but a collection of souls that Christ redeemed and sanctified.

She is the One Body of Christ, One Bread.

⁶ Mt. 15:27

⁷ Mt. 15:28

⁸ Mt. 18:10

This one loaf of Bread feeds the world, filled the world when it was broken.

Do not despise nor devalue any person, for they are also a member in and of the Body of Christ. As the Pope is a member of the Body of Christ, so too the poor person is equally a member of the Body of Christ.

Christ died for everyone; not for the great, nor for the righteous, but for sinners.

For this reason, each person must examine themselves, their heart, and reassess their understanding of Christ's commandment.

Gather up the fragments; care for them; for they are very precious to Christ and can fill 12 baskets.

These fragments can be a source of blessing to the whole world; they will feed and satisfy many souls.

Glory be to God forever. Amen."

BIBLE TRANSCRIPT (BIBLE VERSES)

“26 Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”” Jn. 6:26-27

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body.”” Mt. 26:26

“Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost” Jn. 6:12

“Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.” Jn. 6:13

“1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.

2 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes,

3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool,"

4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

6 But you have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?

7 Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well;

9 but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” Jam. 2:1-9

“And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table”

Mt. 15: 27

“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” Mt. 15:28

“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.” Mt. 18:10

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