

## Lent Day 11

Monday February 26, 2018

### Reading: John 6:1-40

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

### Reflection

We have become a utilitarian people — everything is weighed by how it benefits the individual. But, what would you think of a husband who was married to his wife because he couldn't fend for himself so he thought it best to have someone look after him? Not well, I should hope, as that would effectively make the wife a slave. In fact, this is one major reason we dislike Mr. Collins in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. He's just too pragmatic a man — Elizabeth refused, so her best friend will do. As long as he leaves with a suitable wife it matters little what woman it is. So despite being a utilitarian people we still have a measure of sensibility that tells us people ought not to be used in this way.

That is Jesus's objection here — sort of. We have this well known story of Jesus feeding the five thousand using 5 loaves and 2 fish. It becomes clear that the people — who liked being fed in a miraculous way (who wouldn't) — are going to make him take up the mantle of king, but he has another path to walk so he leaves. Naturally, the crowd follows and Jesus calls them out. We might have a bit of trouble with Jesus's distinction between the sign and the feeding, because the sign *was* the feeding. Remember, Jesus's signs were that the kingdom of God (future) has broken into the present in Jesus himself. All these miraculous things that Jesus does is meant to affirm to the person watching that this has indeed happened and Jesus is who he says he is. So Jesus is saying to the people, “You're not here for the kingdom, you're here for the food.” They are a utilitarian people and Jesus is abhorred that they would look at him so.

Of course, it's not just 'those' people, it's 'us' people. We look at God in this way all the time. There are times when we give God almost no thought, and certainly not the worship he's due, until crisis hits or we need something or we can't find our car keys. Then we pray pragmatically — God fix this! Now! In short, a lot of the time we do not want God for God's own sake, but for what he can do for us. Jesus goes on to point out the irony. If you would want me, rather than bread, you would end up with the bread that comes out of heaven — always enough for each day. Lent is a time to repent for trying to make God our fairy godmother and to renew our desire for God's own self.

### Prayer

Bread of heaven, increase our desire for you and you alone. Feed us on yourself so we may eat and never be hungry. Shift our attention from our stomachs to your beauty. Amen.