

"Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Feast was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading."

I woke up on the morning of my birthday this week and turned on the radio only to hear that I am among the 40% of people still alive who all those years ago sat glued to our black and white TVs and watched the grainy images of the first man walking on the moon. It may seem like nothing now but back then it was amazing to watch a man going where no man had ever walked before, where only our creator had been.

In today's Gospel we see Jesus Christ, the man from Nazareth going where no man had ever gone before, doing when men and women don't normally do, only God. And these miracles are a sign that that is exactly who Jesus is- God himself, the God who goes where most people's idea of God never goes, the God who came to earth to walk among us.

The first sign of who Jesus is had to do with food. Last Sunday 3.7m Australians sat around watching two ladies cooking chooks and baking chocolate mousse in the final of "Master chef". The disciple John tells us 5,000 men plus women and children witnessed Jesus Christ go one better. Jesus had 5,000 men and their families to feed, not from an industrial kitchen but out in the open. The only ingredients the disciples could muster were a few poorman's' bread rolls and a couple of tidbits of fishpaste. Jesus told everyone to take their places at the table – in other words to sit down on the green grass and wait for dinner to be served. Then he gave thanks to God for this meagre meal and started handing it out. Miraculously everyone was satisfied, they ate **"as much as they wanted"** (v11). In fact they were so full there were 12 extra large doggy bags for the 12 disciples to take home with them! The Masterchef at work! No secret ingredients, no magic words, only his words, words of thanks and blessing, creative word of God. Jesus had done what no man or woman had ever done in the kitchen before - but God had done. God did that very same thing when he miraculously fed his people with bread and meat out in the desert during the Exodus after rescuing them from Egypt. Now Jesus had done what the people were hoping would happen when the messiah came – they were hoping for bread from heaven, a repeat of that kitchen miracle. And Jesus pulled it off in front of them to perfection.

No wonder they wanted to make him king, "King of the Kitchen", by force. They wanted Jesus to keep on churning out food for them and maybe other miracles as well. They thought God would send them someone who would repeat all the miracles of the exodus for them and make life easy for them, and Jesus was it, just like we sometimes expect Jesus to repeat all his miracles for us or

else we think he is a dud. Just like we look to world leaders and hope a new one will change everything for us, give us jobs, feed and educate our kids and look after our health. If Jesus could multiply bread he is the kind of king we would be happy to have in the kitchen.

But Jesus withdraws. He goes up a mountain to be alone. The limelight was not for him, not yet anyway, and not because of miracles that filled their stomachs and got their applause. Jesus, the Masterchef had more to offer than multiplied bread and fish. There was a deeper hunger he came to satisfy. **“Whoever comes to me will never be hungry”**, he would later say as he reflected on this miracle and their reaction to it. Their souls would be satisfied, their hunger for God and table fellowship with God met when they really understood him and looked to him for the very best he could offer them, and that was himself.

The disciples pack up and head for home. On their way back as they are struggling with the oars on the lake they see Jesus walking to them on the water. Again, Jesus going where no man had gone before, walking on water, calming nature. **“It is I. Don’t be afraid” (v20)** he tells them. “It is I”, “I am”, the words God gave Moses when he wanted to know God’s name. “I am” says Jesus, God is here on the water, calming your fears, the God who heaped up the Red Sea for the Israelites to walk through to safety and the Jordan River for them to enter the promised land. “I am he and I am here with you in the storm”.

Again Jesus goes where no man has gone before. He miraculously fed them and now he miraculously comes to them on the water, where only the Creator and rescuer of Israel could go. Soon he would walk to the cross, walk where no one would dare to imagine any god would walk, to suffer and die for and save the people he loves, and that’s all of us.

Not only did the food turn out to be more than expected, Jesus himself was turning out to be more than they expected or hoped for. A surprise packet. More than a new Moses, more than just a new prophet like Elisha and Elijah who God had miraculously used to feed people. These signs said he was no less than God, God come to live with them in the flesh, and soon they would discover he was God who had come to die and rise up for them in the flesh. God who wanted to be with them and walk with them and provide for them and save them.

On the moon one of the Astronauts took out some bread his pastor had consecrated for him in church before he left, and there on the moon he celebrated Holy Communion. He realised that the NASA supplied rations were not enough to get him through this adventure, ordeal and challenge which had pretty small odds of succeeding. He knew he was standing where no man had stood before and he knew he could not live by bread alone. He knew he needed his inner man fed by the God who had gone where no other so called gods would dare to go. What about us? We may not be going to the moon this week but we have to live life on earth. To live life we need physical bread but we need more than that, and if we are also to go where no sinners can go on their own, and that is into the presence of God in heaven when we die, then we need heavenly food for the journey now, food prepared by the Masterchef, Jesus himself. You get that food today in Holy Communion. Jesus will again take bread, give thanks and give it to you. A small insignificant amount of bread and a small insignificant amount of wine, but in his hands and with his words it becomes the container of his body that walked to the cross for us and his blood that was shed for us. And there is more than enough of Jesus to go around. As the risen Lord he can be this morning wherever Christians break his bread in his name and with his words. **“It is I, don’t be afraid”**, instead be filled with life, love, courage, faith, hope, and with Christ himself, the God who comes where no gods would go, into the hearts and lives of sinners like us. Now the Masterchef, the Bread of Life, Jesus is getting things ready for us, and we are about to go where no man can go without him, into heaven itself and eat and drink with him and of him in Holy Communion. A few small steps to the altar but a giant leap of faith. Don’t be afraid, take those steps in faith again today and enjoy.