
Easter Meditation 2008

The Rev. Canon George M. Maxwell, Jr.
Friday, April 4, 2008
Acts 5:34-42 | John 6:1-15

Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted." John 6:11

It was a beautiful spot—a meadow tucked into a bend in the river. We pulled in just as the sun was setting and pitched our tents. The kids were still young, and we had been looking forward to this trip. We knew just what we wanted to do. Burgers, smores and ghost stories before we crawled into our bags that night, and eggs, bacon and coffee when we got out of them in the morning.

I pushed some stones into a fire ring, and sent the kids out to gather some wood. I figured I was ready for whatever they found. I had a starter log in the trunk.

That, of course, is precisely when things started to go wrong. The kids came back empty handed. The edges of the meadow had been picked clean. I ventured a little deeper into the woods, but couldn't find anything that wasn't green or wet. And then, as if it had been part of the plan all along, the starter log wouldn't start.

As I was explaining to the kids why we really didn't need a fire (an argument they were not even beginning to buy), I noticed a man walking over from a neighboring campsite. "Need some wood?" he asked. He was carrying several split logs in his arms. Clearly, he had brought this wood from home.

While I was still thanking him, I noticed another man walking over from the campsite on the other side carrying a cardboard box. "You might want to tear this up and use the pieces to get the fire started," he offered. "We've already eaten the food we packed in it."

We must have looked pitiful. It turns out that each of these men lived nearby and frequented this site. I suspect that I was not the first guy from the city to come into their world with more gear than sense.

Yet, their invitation was clear. We were welcome. They opened their hearts and put smiles on my children's faces.

That, it seems to me, is where the real miracles occur—in the heart. Jesus fed 5,000 people with a couple of loaves and a few dried fish. He might have done something to the food. I suspect, though, that Jesus did something to the crowd.

I suspect that Jesus created in his listeners a sense of God that changed their hearts. He told them about the coming Kingdom and then he gave them a chance to experience it. He invited the crowd to prepare for a meal, and then those who thought that they were different began to see the ways in which they were all the same. He gave thanks to God, and then the more religious folk who often brought food with them to make sure that they didn't get caught having to eat the wrong things with the wrong people decided to do just that.

I suspect that the miracle of the loaves and the fishes is not really about whether Jesus can change the laws of physics. It's about how Jesus does change our hearts and how we behave when we see the world through his eyes. It's about the Kingdom of God.

And I have a picture of it" three children eagerly watching a pot full of water that they put on a breakfast fire for their Dad's coffee.

" The Reverend Canon George Maxwell Jr.

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