

Sunday 28th July 2024; Trinity 9. Benefice Holy Communion Ampleforth

Decades ago, when I was embarking on A levels at school, some new subjects were coming on stream, Sociology, Psychology and Economics. Personally, I was drawn to the first two as Economics didn't really appeal. It seemed to look at the world through the lens of *scarcity*. In fact, the definition that I remember of economics is that it is "*the study of the allocation of scarce resources among competing ends.*" In other words, "There isn't enough to go around, - of money, or of time, or of land, or of any other resource", and economics is devoted to studying how these scarce resources are distributed. That's why economics is sometimes called "the dismal science." because it is based on this view that there is not enough; that there is never enough. It's a common way to look at the world even though in reality there is probably more than enough to go round if shared unselfishly and equally and without desire for profit. How we share our resources with others is more about a willingness to be generous and a compassionate, unselfish attitude.

You could say the disciples are looking at the world in an economic way in today's gospel reading. They see a hungry crowd, but have very scarce resources, and have no idea what to do. Jesus, however, sees this as an opportunity to help the disciples look at the world in a very different way, that with Him, there is always enough.

The problem is that the disciples are looking at this situation as economists, not as followers of Jesus. They are convinced that they don't have enough, because they are focused on what they *don't* have. and they are forgetting what they *do* have. What they *do* have is Jesus. Jesus has been performing many miracles, and his disciples have been witnessing these amazing displays of his power. So, why wouldn't Jesus be able to feed this crowd? The

disciples don't believe that Jesus can. Why? Because when you look at the world through the lens of scarcity, there is never enough of anything. It is almost as if these disciples are looking at Jesus as a scarce resource, only able to do so much and they want to make sure that they use this resource carefully. But Jesus is not a scarce resource! With Jesus, there is always enough! Jesus teaches us a different way of looking at the world, his way, through the lens of *abundance*, not of *scarcity*. Looking at the world this way changes how you live in the world. When we see the world through the lens of abundance, not scarcity, amazing things can happen. Sadly, everything around us tells us that it's not true, that even when we have enough, we are told that we need more. The truth is, however, is that actually we probably have enough food to eat, enough clothes, shelter, compared to many people in our country, and in our world that are hungry, that are homeless, and that clearly do not have enough, and it should be them we should focus on. As I said earlier it comes down to a compassionate attitude that prompts compassionate actions as individuals and as a society.

Then on a deeper level, if we look at the world through the lens of scarcity, it may feel as though we don't have enough. That is caused by the consumer society in which we live, which compels us to want and have more. This can create a restlessness, and a feeling of discontent and create a sense that we will never have enough and as long as we seek to feed our spiritual hunger with the things of this world, we will never find that hunger is satisfied. Similarly, if we as believers in a God of love, abundance and joy convey a message of criticism, inclusiveness, and negativity - we will be seen in the same way as economics - dismal!

With Jesus, there is always enough. Jesus is always willing to take whatever meagre gifts we are willing to share, whatever simple and heartfelt prayers, and receive them, bless them, and give them back to share with the world,

because Jesus makes sure there is always enough because in Him all things are transformed for the good of all, as St Paul says today, “*to accomplish abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine.*”

Thanks be to God. Amen.