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Today is called “Refreshment Sunday” or “Mothering Sunday”, on account of the Gospel, of Jesus feeding the five thousand, and the mention of Jerusalem, the Holy City, as the mother of us all in the Epistle. This evolved in England into a kind of the original Mother’s Day. Jerusalem is the mother of us all. And yet Jerusalem is perhaps one of the only earthly cities in which there exists two meanings for the name. There is the earthly city of Jerusalem, the Jerusalem on the map which has waxed and waned over thousands of years, from the central place of most of the action in the Bible to what it is today. Then there is that second Jerusalem, the Heavenly Jerusalem, that which we also call Heaven.

The Heavenly Jerusalem is what we all hope and long for, the city with streets of Gold, gates of pearl, and walls made of precious stones. Yet because of its chief occupant, God the Holy Trinity, even this romantic wish seems to dull when we look at the Father enthroned in all His glory with Jesus at His right hand and with the Holy Ghost being exchanged between them both. The prophet Isaiah caught a glimpse of this heavenly Jerusalem, and wrote, *I saw the Lord, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple, Above him stood the seraphim... And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”*<sup>4</sup> *And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.* The sights and sounds of the Heavenly Jerusalem seem too overwhelming for our imaginations to comprehend.

It should be a humbling thought, that this heavenly Jerusalem, and even the earthly Jerusalem, is the mother of us all. After all, the earthly Jerusalem is where Jesus walked, where He was crucified and resurrected from the Dead. It is where Ezekiel saw visions of God enthroned and hovering above the earth. It is where the prophets lived and died, who prophesied not just the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, but of our place in salvation history. It is remarkable, with all of this in mind, with the image of God enthroned in Isaiah, and Ezekiel, hearing just a glimpse of God’s overwhelming transcendence, that He would come down from Heaven, humble Himself to be born of a pure Virgin, suffer to lead us on to His Cross or even, as in today’s Gospel, bother Himself with feeding the multitude. As St. Augustine wrote, *to govern the whole universe is surely a greater miracle than to satisfy five thousand men with five loaves of bread.* But this is one of the paradoxical characteristics of God, summed up so adequately in the old country hymn, *Little is much when God is in it.* We see this in the Exodus, when God fed the Israelites daily with manna from heaven, a mysterious bread that rained down upon them as they journeyed through the desert. We see it again in this morning’s Old Testament Lesson with Elisha multiplying a pot of soup that was presumed to be poisoned.

Elisha's mentor, the prophet Elijah, saw a similar miracle with the widow's cruse of oil that never ran dry, and the barrel of meal that never emptied.

We are reminded this morning that God is not just a transcendent God whom we cannot even begin to imagine, He is not just seated in heaven surrounded by a myriad of angels who worship Him, but He reaches down to us and is concerned with our needs. He is concerned with something so simple as an empty stomach. Likewise, Jesus, the Word and Wisdom of God, who must be about His Father's business, who heals the sick, casts out demons, cleanses the leper, and raises the dead, stops and teaches on His way to Jerusalem, and multiplies bread and fish for over five thousand people, using only five loaves of bread, two fish and a prayer. Would any other god do this? Would any other god condescend to emerge from His Divine Transcendence to be concerned with a hungry multitude?

And why do we read in the Gospel that He is concerned with testing Philip? From the Gospels we gather that Philip may not have been among those disciples with the strongest faith. He appears at times to be a little dense, struggling to grasp what our Lord is trying to reveal to him. And so in the Gospel we see how Jesus invites Philip to place his small faith in our Lord. Philip's response to the Lord is *Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little*. Our Lord's reaction is not just to multiply loaves of bread for the multitude, but to multiply Philip's faith. *Little is much when God is in it*, and so He takes Philip's faith and transforms it, and we are reminded again that this is a characteristic of the Heavenly Jerusalem, that this is all a part of God's grace.

Blessed John Keble writes that God, *helps our souls as He helps our bodies, through the aid of ordained means; and sometimes He may cause those means to fall short, and then may supply them as suddenly and abundantly as He multiplied those loaves and fishes. A person may have but little learning, he may be quite unable to read, and may seem to himself as if he did not well understand what he hears, and yet if he have the fear of God in his heart, and try to live accordingly, he shall eat and be filled with spiritual meat and drink.* And he does not stop there, Keble goes on, *one good lesson, one verse, one prayer, may be a treasure to him, which he shall never lose. He may be a good way from Church, he may have few helps at home, but if he really try to make the most of what little he has, God can and will make a great deal of it, to him. Half a prayer remembered as having been learned in childhood, an old torn Bible or Testament on a shelf, the remembrance of some good Christian formerly known, his sayings, his tone of voice, his manner of coming in and going out, all these and other such things are as the scanty fare of that multitude, the five barley loaves and two small fishes, which became abundant under His creative Hand, enough to feed and to fill many thousands.*

We, in our distress and anxiety, naturally look on our material supplies, and say to ourselves, what am I to do? I have only just so much. This again is not unlike

what passed between our Lord and S. Andrew; for when S. Philip said, *there are too many people, we can never buy enough*, Andrew remarked, *There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?* So might some say to one another at the week's end, when prices are high, and wages are low, *we only get paid so much, so many dollars a week, but what are they among so many?* How often do such thoughts occur? but in a good and believing heart they are presently followed by another thought, *God is here, God will provide, God will make a little go a great way*; His word is, *Seek ye first My kingdom and righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*. There are some who know something of the happiness of this thought, the thought of clinging to God only, and living under the shadow of His wing; after all, He did say, *Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* Blessed are those of us who learn to rely on His Fatherly care, lying down and sleeping soundly at night, however bad the times may be, because we know that He is watching over us, and will be near us to take care of us in the morning, to take care not of ourselves only, but of those whom He has trusted with us and commanded us to love.

May we know more and more of this comfortable trust, this *peace of God which passeth all understanding*, this only refuge against the cares of the world: and that we may know more and more with the ways of His spiritual Providence, the sign of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

*And now unto God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed as is most justly due, all might, majesty, dominion, and power, both now and forever, world without end. Amen.*