

## Reflection Sunday 2nd August 2020

*Five loaves and two fish  
are never enough  
until you start  
giving it away.*

### Reading: Matthew 14:13-21

#### ***Jesus Feeds Five Thousand***

*<sup>13</sup> When Jesus heard the news about John, he left there in a boat and went to a lonely place by himself. The people heard about it, and so they left their towns and followed him by land. <sup>14</sup> Jesus got out of the boat, and when he saw the large crowd, his heart was filled with pity for them, and he healed their sick.*

*<sup>15</sup> That evening his disciples came to him and said, "It is already very late, and this is a lonely place. Send the people away and let them go to the villages to buy food for themselves."*

*<sup>16</sup> "They don't have to leave," answered Jesus. "You yourselves give them something to eat!"*

*<sup>17</sup> "All we have here are five loaves and two fish," they replied.*

*<sup>18</sup> "Then bring them here to me," Jesus said. <sup>19</sup> He ordered the people to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, and gave thanks to God. He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. <sup>20</sup> Everyone ate and had enough. Then the disciples took up twelve baskets full of what was left over. <sup>21</sup> The number of men who ate was about five thousand, not counting the women and children.*



Last week I was lucky enough to finally meet up again with our grandchildren. We spent a very happy morning in warm sun in the park enjoying a picnic. I love picnics! In my childhood memories, picnics and summers always seemed to go together. The weather was always glorious, and food always seemed to taste better outdoors. Sitting on a rug in the park last Friday was like going back in time. The park was dotted with similar groups on their rugs all enjoying their picnics too and it was such a lovely scene.

Today's bible reading which continues our journey through Matthew's gospel, looks at another picnic, but one involving rather more people. The feeding of the five thousand, as this story is known, is the only story which appears in all four gospels. They all mention the five loaves and the two fish. They all mention the number of people present, or rather they mention the number of men present, about 5000. It seems women and children were not considered important, but if we assume that the men may have brought their families with them, then perhaps there were nearer 1500 people at the picnic. The crowd have been surrounding Jesus all day and He has been healing the sick amongst them, but as evening approaches the disciples have some concern for their welfare and suggest they are dispersed in order to buy food. Jesus suggests they feed them. But how? And with what? It is then that Jesus is told that the only food they have managed to gather is 5 small loaves and two small fish. Only one gospel mentions a small boy. It is only in John's gospel that we discover where these loaves and fishes have come from: 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish' Andrew, Simon Peter's brother tells Jesus' (John 6:8). This small boy has brought his own meal, possibly packed by his mum who knew he would get hungry. The barley loaves would probably have been small unleavened loaves almost like oatcakes, and the two fish would almost certainly have been small dried fish, just enough to satisfy a small boy's appetite. And once again I am thinking back to my childhood. Who remembers being given a packed lunch for a school trip, but eating it before the school bus has even got to the end of the road instead of saving it for lunch? Luckily this lad has held onto his and now is prepared to offer it for sharing.

Even though we don't read mention of the boy in person in Matthew's account, but learn of him in another version, the person who supplies the food has been listening and watching Jesus as He taught and healed those around Him, and now trusts and believes in Jesus enough to give up his own lunch. He ran the risk of going hungry on a hunch that Jesus might be able to do something bigger and better with his meagre resources.

And we know what happened next. Jesus took the small amount of food, looked to heaven, gave thanks and broke the loaves and fish. He then gave them back to the disciples for distribution, and there was so much food that they filled twelve baskets with the crumbs when everyone was finished. Jesus' miracle was so generous that it didn't just supply a snack to keep the crowds going until they could get a proper meal, he filled them until they couldn't eat anymore.

This story is a great example of what Jesus can do with whatever we offer Him. We might feel that we are incapable of doing anything of importance for God, our meagre offering won't help at all, but we should not concentrate on what we don't have, or what we can't do, or how little we have or can do. Whatever we have is enough if we place it in the Master's hands. Like the food which He took, blessed, broke and handed back to the disciples for them to distribute, He'll take whatever we offer him, bless it, and give it back to us for us to use us to bless others. And, like the crumbs gathered into twelve baskets, nothing of our gifts to God are ever wasted. God uses every single scrap we give Him, in amazing ways beyond our imagining.

I often wonder about the person who was prepared to give up his lunch. He is the hero of this story. Without him Jesus couldn't have fed the five thousand, plus wives and children. We will never know his name, and as I said he is only mentioned as a boy in one account of the incident. We don't know what happened to him afterwards, but once he'd seen Jesus work a miracle with his tiny offering, can you really imagine his life ever being the same again? Wouldn't he want to go on giving to see what else might happen?

We can probably all relate to the unnamed boy, aware that what we have is no match for the need we see around us. But the most significant thing about the boy's offering was not the quantity, it was the fact that he kept nothing back but trusted Jesus with everything he had, and thus became the means by which Jesus could perform this miracle.

But what if this young boy was not the only one there with some food? What if someone else had brought their packed lunch as well but had chosen to keep it hidden under their cloak and ate it secretly? How do you think they would have felt when they saw what Jesus had done - when they realised they could have been part of something magnificent if only they too had been willing to share the little they had?

So what about us? Are we prepared to empty all we have into Jesus' hands and watch Him work wonders with our offerings even though we think them far too small to make a difference? We will place into His hands, not only our gifts and talents but also our weakness, our worries, our concerns, our lack of faith and feel Him mend, replace and return them for us to use in miraculous ways?

This week remember that God will take every last morsel of yourself that you give to Him, and use it in magnificent ways you cannot begin to imagine. He will waste nothing. But you have to be prepared to give it in the first place. God won't force you, the giving has to come freely from you. Our God is an amazing God, He does amazing things. We just need to bring everything to Him.

Amen

Poem by Beth Fisher:

This year I stopped to contemplate the kind of gift I'd bring  
To lay at the nail-scarred feet of my Gracious Heavenly King.  
He's given my very life to me, and the blessings I hold dear,  
But I can't come up with anything appropriate, I fear.  
Every time I give Him something, He more than doubles the return...  
I gave to Him my weakness, His strength He then confirmed  
Would always be there for me to securely hold on to.  
I gave Him my shattered life. He gave me life anew.  
I gave Him my pain and heartbreak, all that troubled my weary soul -  
He gave me hope and happiness, and made my body whole.  
I gave Him all my doubts and fears, the things that stood in the way  
of my daily service in His name. He made them go away.  
I offered Him my feeble voice, to sing His praise in song  
He filled my heart with a melody, that will last my whole life long.  
I offered Him my hands to serve, to help out those in need,  
He gave me the talent to use these tools, so that I would succeed.  
I gave Him my life completely, to shine for Him in a world of night  
He gave me a wonderful testimony, a way to share His light.  
I offered Him my eyes to see all that they could take in  
He showed to me a world of fear, unhappiness and sin.  
For every gift I gave to Him, He handed back to me  
Instructions for their uses - endless possibilities  
To reach a world that need to find the Saviour that I found,  
So on and on, I serve, for to Him in love I'm bound.

Music: Matt Redman - The Heart of Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OD4tB1o6YLw>

**Prayer:** (by Rev Karla Miller)

Dear God,  
Remind me to  
share  
whatever  
is in my basket  
today.  
You will do the rest.  
Amen.