

Service for Week 22nd – 28th July 2024

by Chaplain Andy

Our Opening Prayer.

Almighty God. Help us each day to remind ourselves of your goodness, to recall the ways you have blessed us, and to keep you at the forefront of our lives, loving and working for your glory, in the name of Christ we ask it.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,

Amen

Bible Reading Jn 6:1-15

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

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.

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God

Reflection.

The time when Jesus provided a picnic for five thousand people is one of the best-known bible accounts which is recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John's gospels. Many of you may remember perhaps being taught about it in church or Sunday School.

When a particular incident such as this becomes so well-known we have a tendency to think – well what actually happened has become embellished

and romanticized over the years and we tend not to take it so seriously. There have been attempts to explain away what happened. It has been suggested that the people gathered there had brought food with them and following the example of the boy with the five loaves and two fish, they were encouraged to share their food with each other.

But if that was what happened why would such an account be regarded by all four apostles important enough to be included in their gospels? No, this incident in the life of Jesus that they were recording was much more important than that. What happened was a 'miracle' – it was an extraordinary event that did not conform to natural or scientific laws.

The gospel writers considered that what Jesus did that day on the mountainside, by providing food for 5000 people was truly a miracle. Miracles were then and still are considered to be an act of God and this was the main reason that this account was so important for them all to include. Recording this miracle of feeding 5000 people from five loaves and two fish also connected with accounts in their scripture (our Old Testament) about the prophet Elisha and how God provided manna (a type of food) for the Israelites while in the desert. The message being that when

facing extreme circumstances miracles can happen as God cares for us all.

This is what happened on the mountainside when Jesus asks Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?". Jesus saw that so many people were gathering there, people who had followed him for miles to hear his teaching who were now tired and hungry. He took pity on them because he cared so much and he provided food for all of them.

The gospel writers through their accounts of the life of Jesus taught us that Jesus was of God. He cared deeply for the people just as God cares deeply for each one of us. Jesus acted when the people were facing a difficult situation in the same way God acts in our lives when we face difficult situations and circumstances.

The twelve leftover baskets of food suggest a promise that God will provide even for those who were not present that day on the mountainside by the Sea of Galilee.

Amen

Closing prayer

Living God, help me to understand that whatever I may face you will guide and guard me, protecting me from evil and enfolding me in your loving arms. In that knowledge may I meet every day with quiet trust. **Amen**

Prayer inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett