

Service for Week 27th July- 2nd August

2026 By Chaplain Andy

Our Opening Prayer.

Living God, help us to remember that you are a God that never sleeps. When we feel overwhelmed by trouble, help us to remember that you are close by, and whatever we may face you will guide and guard us. May we meet each day with quite trust.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven.....

Amen

Bible Reading Matthew 14 :13-21

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

"Bring them here to me," he said.

And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up

to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

Later this summer we are going to our family picnic that we hold in a park each year. We hit upon the idea of holding a picnic in a park because when everyone brings their own fold out chairs and food –nobody has to make tea, wash up or clear up afterwards. And over the years this has developed – the older aunts and uncles have one by one passed on but their children and their children have carried on the traditional picnic. We often share some of what we have brought which is great because there is a real mixture of tastes and cultural food reflecting the multi – ethnic mix that make up most families these days.

Our text today is about a huge open-air picnic for 5000-and that number was just the men, there were also hundreds of women and children. Jesus and the disciples had gone off to a lonely place, but the crowd follow him – and Jesus takes compassion on them because as he says they are like sheep without a shepherd.

Straight away we can identify with that can't we – there are times in life when we are feeling lost – we start following the crowd but don't know where that is leading to. Jesus is reminding them and us exactly who he is and that we all belong. We are all God's people and even when we are tired and hungry God will not forget us and will provide for us. And if we do forget that we only have to cast our minds back to similar events we read about in the Old Testament. Such as when God provided food for Moses and the Israelites as they trekked across the desert. Jesus' message is - remember how God didn't let down your ancestors in their time of need and although he has brought about a new order through his Son Jesus Christ- nothing has changed –God will not let you down he will look after you and protect you.

But this is not achieved by being individually very religious or leading a life which is exclusive – no this is achieved by being a community – a community for God together. This bringing people together into a relationship is what is happening in this account of the feeding of so many people in the open air. But wait you say – that was alright for the crowd of people who are there listening to the teachings of Jesus- they ate well – but what about all those people who weren't able to follow Jesus at that time?

Well, the answer I believe is in those 12 basketfuls of scraps that were left over. The message here for us is that everyone, even those that were not there that day with Jesus –who were not able to be part of that community then - or part of our community now, will have a share in it –because there is sufficient for everyone who wants to accept it. This account then is not just an account of a nice picnic in the open air – it is a reassurance of God's love for each and every one of us, it is a reminder of God's rescue and help in difficult times in the past and most importantly it points us to the future.

It points us through the the broken bread to the death of Jesus, -connects us with the last supper and brings us into that closeness with Christ that we can experience through sharing the meal together which we call Holy Communion. Finally, it points us to the future – beyond the resurrection of Christ to our own resurrection when we shall be reunited with God in eternal life. We are one community of God. We often say these words in services- Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread. **Amen**

Closing prayer

Loving God, I remember all the ways you have blessed me across the years, knowing that when I have needed you most you have been there for me and will forever continue to be. **Amen**

Prayers inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett