

Introduction

In today's first reading God invites all who are hungry or thirsty to receive food and drink without cost. Jesus feeds the hungry multitude and reveals the abundance of God. At the eucharistic table we remember all who are hungry or poor in our world today. As we share the bread of life, we are sent forth to give ourselves away as bread for the hungry.

Prayer of the Day

Glorious God, your generosity waters the world with goodness, and you cover creation with abundance. Awaken in us a hunger for the food that satisfies both body and spirit, and with this food fill all the starving world; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Romans 9:1-5

This begins a new section in Paul's letter in which he will deal with the place of Israel in God's saving plan. He opens by highlighting how Israel's heritage and legacy include being God's children, having God's covenants, being given God's law, participating in worship of God, and receiving divine promises.

¹I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit—²I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. ⁴They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; ⁵to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Matthew 14:13-21

After John the Baptist is murdered, Jesus desires a time of solitude. Still, his compassion for others will not allow him to dismiss those who need him, and he is moved to perform one of his greatest miracles.

¹³Now when Jesus heard [about the beheading of John the Baptist], he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. ¹⁵When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." ¹⁶Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." ¹⁷They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." ¹⁸And he said, "Bring them here to me." ¹⁹Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Sermon

Filled

Jesus filled a crowd with his words and blessed fish and bread.

It was one of my favourite bedtime stories,
growing up.

A little blue book,
with a blond, blue-eyed boy,
on the cover,
offering his lunch basket to Jesus.

Each time I heard it
I imagined being as generous as he.

This morning I'm embarrassed to say
that I've been mistaken about several elements of the story
for more than fifty years.

In my mind I imagined the crowds spending the day with Jesus,
like people who might attend a one-day retreat,
or those who enjoy outdoor concerts or plays.

But that's not what the Bible says,
does it?

According to Matthew
Jesus' public teaching on the shore of Galilee
had come to an end.

He returned to his hometown,
in the hill country,
and found that the folks of Nazareth weren't much interested in what he had to say,

So perhaps he wondered where he would go next.

But then came word that his cousin John,
who had been arrested for his preaching against the king,
had been executed.

His confidence was tested.

So Jesus decided that he and his students needed to get away,
and be by themselves.

But the crowds from other towns followed them,
if not for the message
then for the signs,
the healings.

And when the disciples realised they were in the middle of nowhere,
hemmed in on all sides
by people who wanted Jesus to help them,
they were nervous and afraid.

“Jesus, tell the people to go home,
or at least the nearest village,
and get food for themselves there.”

To which a calmer Jesus tells the disciples that the crowd can stay.

“You’ll find a way to feed them.”

In this version there is no little boy,
blond or otherwise,
who shares his lunch.

The five loaves and two fish may have been the last of the disciple’s provisions.

It might have been enough for 13 men.

But not for a large crowd.

Yet Jesus asks them to let go of their meal,
in order that he might share it.

The restless and possibly demanding crowd was asked to sit down.

Not for a lesson,
or some healings,
but to listen and watch as he prayed over these scant provisions.

Before it was a sign for the masses
it was a message for the disciples.

“Share even what little you have with others in need.”

“God might just surprise you.”

Then the blessed bread and fish were passed around.

Until all had eaten,
and the leftovers could be gathered;
twelve baskets full.

I can’t explain what happened that day.

Whether Jesus multiplied the food in miraculous fashion,
convinced the people to be generous with hidden rations,
or even if he staged the whole thing (as one commentator has suggested)
by drawing from a large cache of food that had been hidden in the field

I simply don't know.

Except that the 12 baskets
was a symbolic way of saying
that the 12 tribes had been revived,
and that Jesus would lead them like a new Moses.

Like manna and quail in the wilderness,
food for the journey to the Promised Land,
a gift from God.

And that they were filled,
satisfied.

Jesus gave the peasants of Galilee hope.

Miracle or call to generosity,
the feeding of the 5000
invites us to share what we have,
and trust that God will make it enough.

A shift from a theology of scarcity
to a theology of abundance.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A Your bountiful creation offers sustenance and life for all creatures. Protect this abundance for the well-being of all. Reverse the damage we have caused your creation: the pollution we have poured into the St. Lawrence River, and the emissions which spoil the air we breathe. Teach us to care for these natural gifts. Lord, in your mercy,

C **Hear our prayer.**

A You take resources that appear to be meager, bless them, and there is enough. May your church, including our friends at St. John's Estonian, trust that what you bless and ask us to share with the world is abundantly sufficient. Lord, in your mercy,

C **Hear our prayer.**

A You offer yourself to all the nations and peoples of the earth, inviting everyone to abundant life. Bring the prophetic vision to fullness, that all nations will come to you to find joy and guidance. Lord, in your mercy,

C **Hear our prayer.**

A You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Hear the anguish of tender hearts who cry to you in suffering and satisfy their deepest needs. Bring wholeness and

healing to those who suffer in body, heart, soul, and mind (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

A You continue to accompany us through this pandemic, giving wisdom to researchers, strength front-line workers, patience to those house-bound, healing to those who have been struck ill, and peace to those who have died. Remind us that caution is an act of loving-kindness for our neighbours. Lord, in your mercy

C Hear our prayer.

A You offer freely the fullness of salvation. Give Christ the Redeemer such a welcoming heart, that our words and actions may extend your free and abundant hospitality to all whom we encounter. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

A You gather your saints as one, united in the body of Jesus. Bring us with all your saints to the heavenly banquet. We remember with love and thanksgiving the saints we have known (*especially Anthony*). Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

P In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

Blessing

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers,
nor things present, nor things to come,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

God, the creator, ✝ Jesus, the Christ,
and the Holy Spirit, the comforter,
bless you and keep you in eternal love.

Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.