

**Written Service Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2024**  
**A service of worship for use at home**  
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Methodist Circuit  
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**Feeding of the Five Thousand:**

**Call to Worship:** Psalm 139:1-6

You Lord have examined me and you know me.  
You know everything I do; from far away you understand all my thoughts.  
You see me, whether I am resting or working; you know all my actions.  
Even before I speak, you already know what I will say.  
You are all around me on every side; you protect me with your power.  
Your knowledge of me is too deep, it is beyond my understanding.

**Hymn:** Singing the Faith 24: Come, now is the time to worship

Come, now is the time to worship. Come, now is the time to give your heart.  
Come, just as you are to worship. Come just as you are before your God, come.

One day every tongue will confess you are God, one day every knee will bow.  
Still, the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose you now.

Come, now is the time to worship.....

**Prayers of Adoration and Praise:**

Gracious God, you are Lord of this day and every day.  
We gather to give you praise.

Loving God, you are the source of love,  
Out of your compassion you love even us.  
We gather to give you praise.

Eternal God, you are the source of peace,  
Bringing concord to conflict and hope to despair and comfort to sorrow.  
We gather to give you praise.

Liberating God, you promise freedom:  
Releasing us from all that stops us being true followers of Christ.  
We gather to give you praise  
In the name of Jesus, **Amen**

**Reading:** John 6:1-15 (From Good News Bible)

After this, went across Jesus Lake Galilee. A large crowd had followed Him, because they had seen the miracles of healing those who were ill. Jesus went up a hill and sat down with His disciples. The time of the Passover Festival was near. Jesus looked round and saw a large crowd coming to Him, so he asked Philip, "Where can we buy enough food to feed all these people?"(He said this to test Philip; actually He already knew what He would do.)

Philip answered, "For everyone to have even a little, it would take more than two hundred silver coins to buy enough bread."

Another of His disciples, Andrew, who was Simon Peter's brother, said "There is a boy here who has five loaves of barley bread and two fish. But they will certainly not be enough for all these people."

"Make the people sit down," Jesus told them. (There was a lot of grass there.) So all the people sat down; there were about 5,000 men. Jesus took the bread and gave thanks to God, and distributed to the people who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish, and they all had as much as they wanted. When they were all full, He said to the disciples "Gather the pieces left over; let us not waste any." So they gathered them all up and there were twelve baskets with pieces left over from the five barley loaves that the people had eaten.

Seeing this miracle that Jesus had performed, the people there said, "Surely this is the prophet who was to come into the world!" Jesus knew that they were about to come and seize Him in order to make Him king by force; so He went off again to the hills by Himself.

**Reading:** Exodus 16: 2-12 (From Good News Bible)

There in the desert they all complained to Moses and Aaron and said to them, "We wish that the Lord had killed us in Egypt. There at least we could sit down and eat meat and as much food as we wanted. But you have brought us into this desert to starve us all to death."

The Lord said to Moses, "Now I am going to make food from the sky for all of you. The people must go out every day and gather enough for that day. In this way I can test them to find out if they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to bring in twice as much as usual and prepare it."

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "This evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt. In the morning you will see the dazzling light of the Lord's presence. He has heard your complaints against Him - yes, against Him, because we are only carrying out His instructions."

Then Moses said, "It is the Lord who will give you meat to eat in the evening and as much bread as you want in the morning, because He has heard how much you have complaining against The Lord."

Moses said to Aaron, "Tell the whole community to come and stand before the Lord, because He has heard their complaints." As Aaron spoke to the whole community, they turned towards the desert, and suddenly the dazzling light of the Lord appeared in a cloud. The Lord said to Moses, "I have heard the complaints of the Israelites. Tell them that at twilight they will have meat to eat, and trust in their God."

## **Sermon Part One**

### **Introduction:**

I wonder, did you realise that this is the only miracle that is recorded in all four Gospels? So it was obviously important.

But to fully appreciate this story there are a number of things you should understand first. Jesus and the disciples had started out from Capernaum going by boat. Jesus was utterly worn out as He had spent time healing people and preaching about the Kingdom of God – which was what He came to do. He desperately needed rest. He also needed time alone with His disciples so that they could understand what He was about to do, which was heading towards Jerusalem for His final confrontation with the religious authorities. In addition, He needed to spend time alone with His Father to be absolutely sure that he was doing the right thing.

However, the people wouldn't leave Him alone and followed Him around the north of the Sea of Galilee. They could easily see where He was going from the shore. They were heading for a grassy space near a village called Bethsaida Julias – to distinguish it from the other Bethsaida near Jerusalem where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived.

The Jordan River flowed into the North of the Sea of Galilee, and it was the normal route taken for those going to Jerusalem for the Passover festival thus avoiding going anywhere near the hated Samaritans who lived south of Galilee. So the people who were going to Jerusalem re-crossed the River Jordan near Jericho. In fact we know that the Passover was near so they may have been joined by those people going to Jerusalem for Passover.

From Capernaum across the Sea of Galilee was about four miles. Around the north of the Sea was about nine miles. The people followed Jesus on foot so it would have been an about an hour before they caught up with Him. The people had watched in astonishment at the wonderful things Jesus had done – and it was possible that they followed Him to see Him do more miracles. Some may also have bought the sick with them to see them cured.

Then we come on to the boy who had the loaves and fishes. I am sure that many people have an idea that the loaves were plump and crispy loaves made of fine white bread. The truth is that it couldn't be more different. We understand from the passage that they were barley loaves. These were rough and dry and only the very poorest could afford these. If you picture dry rock cakes you will have an idea what they were like!

Then we come onto the fishes: unfortunately, they were not plump fish that you might get from the supermarket. They would be very like sardines and they were probably pickled. There were shoals of these fish in the Sea of Galilee and they were known all over the Roman world. But there was a problem transporting them. There was no such thing as refrigeration so the only way to transport them was by pickling them. So, the boy had his packed lunch with Him. He probably used the pickled fish to combat the dryness of the barely loaves.

The other thing that you may have got confused about is, where did the baskets come from? You will recall from the story that 12 baskets of scraps were picked up. What you may not know is that if there was a feast, all the scraps left over would be collected up and distributed to the poor and needy. To facilitate this every male would carry a conical shaped basket. In fact the surrounding people made fun of the Israelite men as they were known to carry just such baskets!

**Hymn:** Singing the Faith 250: Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult

Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult of our life's wild restless sea,  
Day by day His voice is calling saying, 'Christian, follow me.'

As of old apostles heard it by the Galilean Lake,  
Turned from home and toil and kindred, leaving all for His dear sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship of the vain world's golden store,  
From each idol that would keep us, saying: "Christian, love me more."

In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease,  
Still He calls, in cares and pleasures: "Christian, love me more than these."

Jesus calls us! By your mercies, Saviour, may we hear your call,  
Give our hearts to your obedience, serve and love you best of all.

## Sermon Part Two

Now we come to the story itself, particularly looking at the characters of Philip, Andrew and the unnamed boy.

First we look at Philip. He was brought up in a Jewish household yet he had a Greek name – which is strange for a Jewish lad. Some scholars have speculated that he was named after Herod Philip 11, who was the most honest of the four sons of Herod the Great, and even speculated that his father was part of the ruler's household. Whatever the meaning of his name, it is reasonable to suppose that Philip's upbringing included being open to all manner of people from the empire. You will recall that it was Philip who bought Greek speaking Jews to Jesus. They obviously felt at home going to Philip.

We know that Philip came from Bethsaida Julias, as it is mentioned in John 1:44 so it was sensible to rely on Philip's local knowledge to ask him where the local shops were that could provide food for the vast crowd. Philip's answer was despairing. He calculated that, if everyone was to get even a little to eat, it would take 200 silver coins, or denarius. That was worth about five pence and was the day's wages for a working man. Philip decided that the situation was hopeless and nothing could be done.

It seems that Philip did not believe that Jesus could perform such a miracle – even though it is mentioned in the passage that Jesus was quite aware of what He would do and was simply testing Philip.

The fact is that when Jesus saw that crowd coming towards Him he was filled with compassion for them. They were like a flock of sheep without a shepherd and He knew that he would have to feed them.

Then we come on to Andrew. His attitude was completely different from Philip's. Whereas Philip was viewing the problem as too difficult to solve, Andrew was the man who said, "I'll see what I can do; and trust Jesus for the rest."

Andrew's name means 'First Called' and the first thing he did was to go and bring his brother, Simon Peter, to meet Jesus. And that seems to be what he was doing here, because it was Andrew who bought the boy to Jesus. No one knows what will happen when we bring someone to Jesus.

There is a story that concerns an old German schoolmaster who, when he entered his class in the morning, used to take off his cap and bowed ceremoniously to them. Someone asked why he did this. His answer was 'you never know what one of these boys might become someday.' And he was right, as one of the boys he taught was Martin Luther!

So Andrew bought the boy to Jesus. Jesus needs what we can bring to Him. It may seem to us that it is very little but Jesus has a need for it, it maybe that the world is denied miracle after miracle because we did not bring what we could to Him.

Lastly, we come to the boy. He had simply bought with him his packed lunch but he offered it to Jesus. If he hadn't done so, there would have been no miracle. So we offer what we can – put it in the hands of Jesus and watch it grow.

Who knows what we can do if we place it in God's hands. There is a story about India around 150 years ago in the area of Dornakal. There was a man called Venkaya who could neither read nor write and in the caste system he was an outcast. He heard from a friend about a new religion that was about a God that loved everyone – even outcasts like him. One day he watched Hindu pilgrims bathing in the river. He was asked by one of the leaders why he was not bathing. He said he no longer believed enough in the Hindu ways.

The leader asked if he was a Christian and Venkaya said, 'no but I would like to be.' The leader told him about an English Christian preacher who was a missionary with the Church Missionary Society.

At that moment Mr Darling, who worked with the Missionary Society, was very distressed: he had spoken of Christ for eight years and had not had one convert. Venkaya sort out Mr Darling and among much opposition taught and baptised sixteen other outcasts.

The seed was beginning to grow. In his old age and quite blind, Venkaya sat by the roadside to tell others the Gospel story. Through his preaching 500 converts were baptised. His work continues to bear fruit. Who knows what miracles happen when we bring to Christ all that we have.

### **Prayers of Confession:**

Lord of Light,

You fill us, your children with your light,

So often your light in us is dimmed by our selfishness and greed.

There are times when we ignore those in need, those who are poor or who do not have anywhere to stay.

We sometimes look at other people and feel we are better than them, so we turn away.

We criticise other people who are doing the best they can.

We can make others feel inferior.

We are unprepared to speak out against injustice.

We are unprepared to stand up for Christ or witness to His love.

And so, the light is dimmed. Forgive us Lord and enable your light to shine through us so that others will see you in us and turn to you and find the answer to all their deepest needs.

We thank you Father that you have promised that when we come to you in repentance you are always prepared to forgive – so forgive us Lord and help us to change.

**Amen**

### **Prayers of Intercession:**

In the Darkness

**Let your Light shine**

Lord of peace; bring peace where there is violence. We bring to you Lord, the people of Yemen, of Afghanistan and we bring to you the people of Ukraine. And we remember soldiers on both sides of the conflict.

In the Darkness

**Let your light shine**

Lord of Justice; bring justice where people live in fear, for those places where governments and soldiers impose their will. At this time we pray particularly for the peoples of the Holy land, both Palestinians and Israelis, especially we pray for the people of Gaza who live in fear. May all the communities of that land find ways to live together with justice and peace. We pray for our brothers and sisters living with persecution

In the Darkness

**Let your light shine**

Lord of the poor and the marginalised; where there is poverty and unfairness, where people are hungry, homeless or suffering for the want of simple medicine, move in the hearts of those who have plenty so that there is a fair sharing of the earth's resources. We pray for all refugees living in terrible

conditions in camps – suffering from hunger, disease and a lack of hope. May they receive mercy, compassion and practical help.

In the Darkness

**Let your light shine**

Lord of creation; forgive us for misusing your created world and making deserts where there had been abundance, for polluting clean air and water. We pray for the governments of the world who have met so often to discuss climate change. Give courage to those who work to save the environment. We pray for those who are suffering because of climate change – the peoples of Sub-Saharan Africa who are suffering the worst drought in living memory, those suffering because of violent floods or wildfires or freak weather events

In the Darkness

**Let your light shine**

Lord of healing and wholeness; we bring to you those who are known to us personally who need your healing power.....

In the Darkness

**Let your light shine**

Lord of the Kingdom of God, who came into this world, not to condemn it but to save, work with your people, give us courage, wisdom and power as we bring the message of your love and forgiveness to a needy world. Send your Holy Spirit and may your Kingdom Come.

In the Darkness

**Let your light shine. Amen**

**Hymn:** Singing the Faith 57: Let all the world, in every corner sing

Let all the world in every corner sing: my God and King!  
The heavens are not too high, His praise may thither fly.  
The earth is not too low, His praises there may grow.  
Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King.

Let all the world in every corner sing: my God and King.  
The Church with psalms must shout, no door can keep them out.  
But above all the heart must bear the longest part.  
Let all the world in every corner sing: my God and King.

**Blessing:**

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and remain with us all this day and forever more. **Amen**