

## 2 Kings 4:42 to end Feeding of a Hundred

<sup>42</sup> A man came from Baal Shalishah, bringing the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread baked from the first ripe grain, along with some heads of new grain. "Give it to the people to eat," Elisha said. <sup>43</sup> "How can I set this before a hundred men?" his servant asked.

But Elisha answered, "Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the Lord says: 'They will eat and have some left over.'" <sup>44</sup> Then he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the Lord.

## John 6:1-21 Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

<sup>6</sup> Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias),<sup>2</sup> and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. <sup>3</sup> Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. <sup>4</sup> The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

<sup>5</sup> 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?" <sup>6</sup> He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

<sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages<sup>Ⓜ</sup> to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

<sup>8</sup> Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, <sup>9</sup> "Here is a boy with five small barley

loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). <sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." <sup>13</sup> So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

<sup>14</sup> After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." <sup>15</sup> Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

## Jesus Walks on the Water

<sup>16</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, <sup>17</sup> where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. <sup>18</sup> A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. <sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles,<sup>Ⓜ</sup> they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. <sup>20</sup> But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." <sup>21</sup> Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

We have three miracle stories today, one from the Old Testament and two from the gospel of John.

I do love the stories in the Old Testament and those of Elijah and Elisha in particular. Some are really strange.

The bible reading for Thursday last week was the time Elijah was sitting on a hilltop and the King sent a captain and fifty men to bring him down. Elijah called down fire from heaven to consume them.

So the King sent another captain and another 50 men. Elijah called down fire to consume them.

A third captain was sent who had the sense to get on his knees and beg Elijah to come and see the king.

What was that all about??? I decided to research and Elijah was demonstrating that there was one God who should rightly be feared...the King had been seeking advice from false Gods.

The first century Jews would have known all these stories by heart so when a Samaritan village refused to allow Jesus to pass through and James and John say "shall we call down fire to consume them" they are remembering the story of Elijah and that the Samaritan village is not recognising who Jesus truly is.

When Jesus feeds people with bread and fish, the people remember the time Elisha fed 100 men with just 20 loaves of barley or the other miracles like manna in the desert which Gilly is going to explore next week.

The Old Testament prophets...Moses, Elijah, Elisha, demonstrated God's power and so naturally enough the miracles Jesus performed would lead to the conclusion that once again a prophet of God was among them...a

prophet with God's power to heal and feed and maybe...set them free.

Last week Jane left the story with Jesus on the far side of Galilee where the people rushed to meet him and be healed by him and we pick up the story where she left off.

The synoptic Gospels all have virtually identical versions of today's story and it involved the disciples suggesting Jesus send everyone away to go and buy food in the villages.

Jesus tells them to feed the people

They reply they say they only have five loaves and two fish.

In the version John tells, the dialogue is with Philip and then Andrew chips in. So, I've put them all together for my version.

Jesus "where shall we buy bread for these people?"

Philip "it would take more than half a year's wages to feed this lot!!"

Disciples "send everyone away so they can buy bread at the local villages"

Jesus "you feed the people"

Andrew "all we've got is what this young boy has, five loaves and two fish. That's not going to go too far".

Jesus "start getting the crowd organised"

The disciples can only see a problem and they can only see that they lack.

We can be just the same. We see a problem and can immediately see all the things we can't do. We don't have eyes of faith, we have eyes that see lack. Not enough. Can't do.

Jesus already knew what he was going to do.

I'm struck by who this boy is. Is he Andrew's son? The son of one of the bigger group that followed Jesus? A local boy? Who is he?

And what is it he's doing? Was he offering to share with Andrew or is he responding to some deep inner urge he doesn't really understand...but does anyway. Somehow what this boy has got is offered to Jesus who uses it to feed five thousand people.

It speaks powerfully to me because I have a similar story which I've shared with you before. When I started visiting and talking about Transforming Trinity a girl got excited about the project and gave £5.

For a very long time I kept the £5 pinned up next to where I work and every time I looked at it I marvelled at the faith and the joy of the gift. I pray the Lord will multiply that gift through all the other individuals and grant making bodies and organisations who can contribute to our vision of transforming this building into a community hub.

I've just had to edit two different documents both requiring up to date figures for the fund-raising. As of last week the figure was £942,127. That's £748,672 collected

and in hand and £193,455 pledged and coming in month by month or annually.

We are just about 2/3rds of the way to our goal of £1,525,000.

Now you could say that the fundraising began when the PCC had the faith to sell the house we owned and our funds began with £395,000 and that would be true enough.

But the first person to actually give of their own money was a girl who gave what she could. £5.

So, following the advice of Ignatius of Loyola and using my imagination I picture myself sitting with Jesus overlooking a church.

Jesus. Where shall we buy the building materials for this church? It needs re-doing.

Jon. That's going to cost a fortune.

Un-named local clergyman. Let's set fire to it and claim the insurance.

Jon. This girl has £5...but how far is that going to go?

Jesus. Start getting everything organised.

Later that day the disciples are out on the lake rowing in rough and stormy weather and Jesus appears to them walking on the water and climbs into the boat. John tells us the disciples were terrified and Jesus reassures them – it's me – don't be afraid.

Earlier I said this was two miracles...but in the book of John the author deliberately gives us seven signs of Jesus divinity. The first is turning water into wine, the second the healing of the nobleman's son...after that you're left to count them up yourself and as you can imagine there's no absolute agreement on those miracles that are signs.

NT Wright regards the multiplication of the loaves and fishes as a sign...but not the evening stroll on the lake.

What do these two miracles mean to us??

Jesus has power over quantity. He can multiply loaves and fish and feed 5000. He can take what we give and do far more than we can imagine.

Jesus intervenes in the most unexpected of ways. When you and I can only see little and lack and impossibility...Jesus is not restricted by our lack.

What this calls for is faith. Faith in a Saviour who can multiply, who can appear, for whom time and space and nature as we know it is no restriction and this can lead us to really honest but satisfying prayer.

I have no idea how you are going to do this...but I'm giving it to you anyway.

Let's pray.

**Rev. Jon Hutchinson, 28 July 2024**