

Scripture:

Isaiah 5:1-5

**John 6:1-45**

“Nourished in Christ.”

What exactly happened a few thousand years ago as thousands gathered around Christ on a hillside on the far side of the Sea of Galilee we don't exactly know.

Did Jesus take 2 little fish and 5 small loaves of barley bread and miraculously cause it to multiply such that all present had enough food to eat?

Or ----- was it a sacramental meal ----- similar to when we celebrate communion?

Did each of the people gathered on the hillside --- get a tiny little piece of bread and fish --- such that they were satisfied in this way ----- symbolically --- and sacramentally.

Or ---- after the young boy brought out his 2 fish and 5 loaves ----- did everyone in turn decide to share what they had packed away --- such that there was more than enough for all to eat their fill?

Or ----- was it a combination of all the above.

Or --- perhaps it was something else altogether ---- as God saw fit.

Anyway you look it at ----- we don't know what exactly happened --- how everyone was fed.

But we do know a few things.

Thousands of people gathered.

Verse 10 tells us that --- “the men sat down, about five thousand of them.”

If there were 5 thousand men ----- then in all likelihood there were tens of thousands of people.

Most men would have had a number of women and a number of children --- some even had a great number of women and a great number of children.

5 thousand men could easily mean 30 or 40 or 50 plus thousand people.

How many exactly --- we don't know ----- but likely 30 or 40 thousand at the very least ---- as that would mean 7 or 8 women and children per male -- -- a conservative guess for sure in that culture ---- at that time.

So tens of thousands of people gather to listen to Jesus.

And they listen so intently --- or at the very least --- they listen for so long -- ---- that meal time quickly approaches.

Evidently the people got so enthralled in what Jesus was saying that they lost track of time and failed to make adequate preparations for their next meal.

In verse 7 Philip indicates that it would take over 8 month's wages to buy enough bread to feed everyone ---- not to mention the struggle it would be to actually locate that much bread ---- in addition to finding the funds to purchase it.

So 5 thousand men and their entourages of women and children gather around Jesus ----- listen at great length --- and are so enthralled that they lose track of time --- and all of a sudden --- out on the hillside ---- tummies start to rumble and the people are hungry.

Jesus has fed them spiritually --- in teaching and healing them ---- Matthew Mark and Luke's versions of this event are more explicit than is John in recounting that Jesus taught and healed on this hillside.

So Jesus has fed them spiritually by teaching and healing them and now they hunger and thirst physically.

And so Jesus does just the same thing He has been doing all day long--- He nourishes them.

And the obvious thing that this event reminds us is that Jesus feeds and nourishes us too.

If we thirst and hunger spiritually Jesus nourishes us --- if we thirst and hunger physically He nourishes us ----- He never leaves us wanting ---- just as he didn't leave this large crowd wanting.

Exactly how he does this isn't always obvious.

How it happened that day on the hillside shore --- we don't know.

Did Jesus miraculously cause the 2 little fish and 5 small loaves to multiply - ---- perhaps --- could He have done this ----- of course He could have.

Were the people fed sacramentally ----- were the 2 little fish and 5 loaves enough to feed everyone sacramentally ----- perhaps --- could it have happened this way ---- of course it could have.

When the boy brought out his 2 fish and 5 loaves --- did a once selfish hoarding group of people unwilling to share --- suddenly follow the example of the boy and bring out of their bags what they had stashed away only to share it with everyone such that there was now enough for all ----- perhaps -- ---- could it have happened this way --- of course it could have.

Or was it a bit of all of these ---- perhaps ----- and really ----- who cares.

Who cares about exactly --- precisely ---- what happened that day.

And who cares because in truth we will never know --- at least not until the end of the world as we know it ---- the second coming --- the day of the resurrection.

What we do know for certain --- and I can testify to this with numerous first hand witness examples ---- as can many others here I'm sure.

What we do know is that when we follow Christ and turn to Him for direction and nourishment ---- He satisfies us --- He feeds and nourishes us.

But of course ----- as is so often the case with Christ ----- there's a little bit more to the story as well.

Even though these last few weeks we've been working our way through the middle part of Matthew's gospel ---- I chose John's version of the "Feeding of the 5 thousand " ----- for a very specific reason today.

And the reason comes in verse 8.

After Philip answers Jesus saying it would take over 8 months wages to feed all the people gathered ---- we have this in verse 8 ----- "Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up."

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And then in verse 9 Andrew speaks saying ----- "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go?"

"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go?"

This is the man that this community is named after ----- Andrew --- Jesus' disciple Andrew --- patron saint of Scotland --- Russia --- and elsewhere.

We don't know a whole lot about the character of Andrew --- what exactly his gifts were --- but we do have this shining example of Andrew's character in John's gospel today.

Andrew brought people to Jesus --- he was a connector --- he led people to Jesus ---- he brought this little boy ---- with his 2 fish and 5 loaves to Christ.

Andrew didn't know what would happen next ---- he does after all say ----- "but how far will this boys food go."

"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go?"

Andrew didn't know exactly what Jesus would do with this bit of food --- and he didn't need to know --- he wasn't concerned with knowing.

What he did know was that it was his role ----- his gifting --- his calling ---- to lead the boy to Christ and leave the rest in Jesus' hands.

Maybe that's our role in and around Whitby --- it's certainly part of our role.

Leading people ----- bringing people to Christ just as Andrew did.

Without Andrew the boy may have walked around aimlessly.

Without Andrew the boy may have simply eaten his food himself or only ever shared it with the few people next to him.

Andrew leads the boy to Christ --- Andrew connects the boy with Christ --- and things change for the entire crowd.

The truth is ----- we never know what will happen --- what will come of it --- ---- when we lead someone to Christ.

When someone is led to Christ the possibilities are infinite ---- Andrew knew this --- so he led the boy to Christ and left the rest in God's hands.

Faced with the prospect of feeding the crowd Philip said something like ---- "This situation is almost impossible ---- it would take a ton of money to get enough food to feed these people ----- indeed it would take over 8 months worth of wages to feed a crowd of this size." ----- clearly Philip had other gifts ----- than the gift of encouragement.

And then there is Andrew ----- who said something like ----- "Well ----- I may not know how we are going to feed all these people ----- but what I can do is lead this boy to Jesus."

Andrew had faith --- and Andrew knew what his part was --- to lead people to Christ ---- and then leave the rest in Christ's hands.

His little act of connecting the boy with Christ changed lives that day.

It was acts like this that caused churches like ours ---- to take his name and put it on our sign out front --- we do well to remember and celebrate this.

St. Andrew ----- disciple of Jesus Christ ---- fisher of men and women ---- the great connector the disciple that led people ----- like this boy ---- to Christ.

And then there is the boy.

He could have simply opened up his bag and eaten --- keeping all he had for himself --- but he didn't.

He came forward and offered what he had for the benefit of others.

Jesus needs what we can bring Him.

Jesus puts to use --- the gifts we bring forward to Him for His use.

We may not have much to bring ---- just as the boy only had a little bit --- what he had packed for about a day away from home.

But in the hands of Christ ---- what appears to be little can turn out to be huge.

When we lay ourselves before Christ ---- ready to let Him do with us what He will ----- the possibilities are endless.

At times we may feel embarrassed with what we have.

Perhaps we may be disappointed with what little we have.

But regardless of how much or how little we have --- we are called to bring it forward to Christ --- and for Christ.

Letting Him use it as He sees fit and not as we might think.

The boy probably wasn't thinking --- "Hey if I bring my 2 fish and 5 loaves Jesus will see to it that everyone will be fed here today on my meager offering."

It's far more likely that he thought something along the lines of----- "Well it may not be much but I'm going to give all I have."

The boy brought forward all that he had.

Andrew led the boy to Christ and brought them together.

Jesus looked after the rest.

And all were nourished.

That's what the story is all about ----- not how many people were actually fed --- and not how they were fed and with what.

There's a powerful simple truth to this event ----- Jesus makes sure that we are nourished.

It reminds me of another event recounted in John's gospel.

In John 9 Jesus restores sight to a man born blind.

And if you recall there is much to do about what exactly happened.

The Pharisees go to the man ---- and ask him what happened --- unsatisfied with his answer --- they go his parents to try to figure out what happened ---- unsatisfied with their answer ---- they go back to the man and ask him again -- --- what happened here.

And basically the man says ----- look --- it's this simple ----- "I was blind and now I see --- and a man named Jesus did it."

"I was blind and now I see --- and a man named Jesus did it."

I can well imagine what people said --- and how they would have questioned what happened that day when all of these tens of thousands of people were fed --- and many of them healed ---- all at the hands of one man ---- that very same Jesus who also made the blind to see.

Many in the crowd likely replied simply and powerfully with ----- "I was hungry and in need --- and a man named Jesus fed me."

"I was hungry and in need --- and a man named Jesus fed me."

Sometimes we're the people in the crowd --- in need of spiritual nourishment ----- in need of healing.

Sometimes we're Philip ----- thinking --- if not also saying something like --  
----- "This is practically impossible --- this is going to take a whole lot more  
than we could ever handle--- we'll never be able to help all of these people."

Sometimes we're Andrew ----- saying ---- "Come here --- come to Christ ---  
He'll know what to do ----- He will help us ----- and He will save us."

And sometimes we're the boy ----- saying ---- "Here you go --- here's all  
I've got --- here are my gifts --- take them and please ---- use them and share  
them with everybody."

What precisely moment by moment ---- detail to detail happened that day  
when thousands upon thousands upon thousands ----- followed Christ ---  
yearning to be taught --- healed --- and fed ---- we don't know.

But we do know is that He nourished them all ---- spiritually ---- physically -  
--- and not one was left wanting more.

Gifts were shared ---- people were connected ----- and Christ satisfied the  
hungry heart and the hungry belly.

And then He carried on down the road to go and do exactly the same thing in  
the next town ----- with the next large crowd of people.

Jesus Christ ----- miraculous healer and multiplier ----- sacramental feeder  
--- changer of hardened hearts ---- and so much more.

Christ was ----- is --- and forever will be the great provider --- the great  
nourisher ---- the great Saviour of all.

When we bring our gifts to Him --- anything is possible.

When we connect people with Him ----- anything is possible.

And when we follow Him --- we are fed ----- we are healed --- we are  
saved ----- and absolutely anything is possible.

Amen.