



ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4797 Curtis Blvd. Port St. John. FL 32927

Sunday Next before Advent
November 24, 2024

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.**

The passage selected for the sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel:

"Then He saith unto Philip, 'Whence shall we buy bread, that we may feed them?' And this He said to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do."

This particular Gospel pairs nicely with the Gospel for Thanksgiving. In the Thanksgiving Gospel. Jesus will teach us not be anxious about the material things, what we eat, what we wear, what we have. This Gospel is a test for the Apostles to see if they have learned the Thanksgiving lesson.

We have this familiar but nonetheless startling Miracle. Jesus takes a few loaves of bread and two fishes, blesses them, then distributes them in such a way that they manage to feed a vast multitude, five thousand men, and the women and children that were with them. Before he performs the miracle, Jesus takes a moment to look at Philip and ask him where they are we going to get the money to take care of these people? And this he said to test Philip, for He already knew what He would do. He wasn't really asking Philip where they would find the money to buy the food. He was testing Philip's faith.

We tend to think of tests as judgments about our skill or worth. The truth is that a good test reveals as much about the administrator of the test as it does about people to whom it is

given. This test reveals the kindness and mercy that characterizes Jesus. He gives this test to the Apostles because He wants them to learn what He has to teach them before He will be taken from them. He is trying to teach Phillip, and all the Apostles, that what they need to complete their commission doesn't rely on what is in the pockets, it relies on the faith that they have in their hearts.

Philip, of course, represents all of us. When Jesus tested Philip, He expected Phillip to give Him an answer. He also expects us to answer Him. Philip's answer is probably very much like every one of our answers, "Two hundred pennyworth wouldn't feed all these people". Phillip's response is to send the people away because he doesn't believe he has enough to go around."

Isn't that the way with all of us? We believe we can be the solution to our problems, that we can fix our problems with the money we put aside, or with the strength of our own arms, or by the cleverness of our minds. But when those resources fail us, like Phillip, we are truly lost, with only frustration or despair as options.

What Jesus is doing with Philip is what He does for all of us. He changes our perspective. In fact, He changes our reality. What had seemed to be so little against the needs of the day wasn't a pittance at all. In the name of Jesus, it is transformed, not only into enough, but into an abundance. This change happens with the resources we have to meet our

daily needs, but it also happens to our being. He changes us, so that when we feel we are inadequate, overwhelmed and in despair against the demands of our families and our lives, we too can be transformed into not only enough love, but an abundance of love.

Jesus was saying, "Philip, trust me. Trust me. Whatever you need to take care of the people that I give to you, I will provide. I know there's only a couple of loaves of bread and there are only two fish here, and I know how many people there are out there, but by my grace, my blessing, what little bit you have will be much more than sufficient. And when all these people are fed, and when they are fed until they are satisfied, there will be twelve baskets full of food to take home at the end of the day, one for each of you that doubt me, I can not only turn what you think is insignificant into enough, I can turn it into abundance."

As Jesus feeds the people, He is teaching Philip? What does Jesus need Philip to do for him? He is saying, "Philip, give up your doubt. Give up your worry. Forget about the purse. Forget about the two hundred pennyworth. We have what we need. You are with me. Whatever bread I give you will feed you as long as you need to be fed."

Of course, that is what Jesus is also saying to us. The bread He gives us when we come to communion will nourish us spiritually for as long as we need it, to get us through this life -- to get us to our purpose, to get us through until we are reunited with Jesus in Heaven.

In this Gospel, Jesus gives us a preview of the sacrament of holy communion. He's getting the Apostles ready. In this miracle, He gives them a test in advance, so at the Last Supper, when the bread is broken and blessed to become His Body and Blood, the Apostle's would

understand how that simple sacrifice would be sufficient for their grace. Even though the elements appear to be so common, they are the means by which our heavenly spirit, our soul, can be sustained while we journey through this life.

This week, we give Thanksgiving for the blessings of the year that is past, but next Sunday, we begin the season of Advent. Advent is the season during which we look to the end of time, The Apocalypse, and to the end of our individual time. As we look ahead, we worry. How will our finances hold up? How will our health hold up?

But the questions should be, how do we care for to the people that we love? How will we get ourselves, and all of them, to heaven? The answer is to trust Jesus. To give of ourselves fearlessly, and to give of ourselves past the point we can't imagine there is any more to give. That is the time when His blessing will transform us, when what seems like a pittance becomes true abundance. That is when we become vessels of grace.

We worry ourselves sick about the needs of the day, and in that worry, we take our eye off Jesus and we open the gates to doubt and to despair because we can't see how what we have is sufficient for us on our journey.

This morning, Jesus is asking of all of us to take our worries, take our fears, take our anxieties, and to offer them up as a gift -- to bring them to the altar, and to leave them with Him. In their place, He is asking us to do something oh so simple -- but oh so hard to do. -- Jesus asks us to put our doubts aside, and to just put our trust in Him.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen