

“Break Now the Bread of Life”

First Reading: 2 Kings 4:42-44

Today’s reading is part of a larger section of 2 Kings that describes the miracles of Elisha, the successor to Elijah. Here the prophet gives food to a hungry crowd. Though there is not enough food to go around, Elisha trusts God, who provides enough and even more to satisfy the need.

⁴²A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to [Elisha,] the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, “Give it to the people and let them eat.” ⁴³But his servant said, “How can I set this before a hundred people?” So he repeated, “Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, ‘They shall eat and have some left.’” ⁴⁴He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the Lord.

Psalm: Psalm 145:10-18

You open wide your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. (Ps. 145:16)

¹⁰All your works shall praise | you, O Lord,
and your faithful | ones shall bless you.

¹¹**They shall tell of the glory | of your kingdom
and speak | of your power,**

¹²that all people may know | of your power
and the glorious splendor | of your kingdom.

¹³**Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; your dominion endures
through- | out all ages.**

**You, Lord, are faithful in all your words, and loving in | all your
works. R**

¹⁴The Lord upholds all | those who fall
and lifts up those who | are bowed down.

¹⁵**The eyes of all wait upon | you, O Lord,
and you give them their food | in due season.**

¹⁶You open | wide your hand
and satisfy the desire of every | living thing.

¹⁷**You are righteous in | all your ways
and loving in | all your works.**

¹⁸You are near to all who | call upon you,
to all who call up- | on you faithfully. **R**

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21

We have been rooted and grounded in the love of Christ, which surpasses all human knowledge. Because Christ dwells in our hearts, our lives are continuously strengthened and empowered by the ongoing presence of the Spirit.

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel: John 6:1-21

In John's gospel, the miracles of Jesus are called "signs," because they reveal the true character of God. As such, they remain within the mystery of God and cannot be brought under human control.

¹Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. ²A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. ³Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. ⁵When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" ¹⁰Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." ¹³So they gathered them up, and from the

fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

¹⁵When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

¹⁶When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. ²⁰But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." ²¹Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

⁵When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?"

Five loaves and two fish....that was how it started...

Break now the bread of life, dear Lord, to me
as once you broke the loaves beside the sea.
Beyond the sacred page I seek you Lord;
my spirit waits for you, O living Word.

Five loaves and two fish – did that little boy's mother have any idea, as she packed his lunch that morning what miracle would come from it?

September 11, 2001 – 38 planes are diverted from their path to the US and land at Gander Newfoundland...word spreads quickly....within minutes, women are hard at work in their kitchens, making sandwiches,as they have always done when word of truble hits. You don't need to know what it is all about to know that at some point people are going to have to eat....

Five loaves and two fish – did all that....

¹⁰Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all.¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.

Five loaves and two fish...

January 12, 2010 – Haiti. Already a poor and struggling country, is rocked by an earthquake...aid pours in from all over. In Canada alone, 300.000 Lutheran donated about \$2.2 Million – and that wasn't the first – or the last-time. A former treasurer of CLWR told me that no matter what disaster happened somewhere around the world...within the week, cheques for CLWR will arrive in the mail– even before CLWR declares their support.

People just know that when disaster strikes, people will need money, and they know that money sent through CLWR will get to work immediately,

and will not be siphoned off into expensive ad campaigns and executive salaries

Five loaves and two fish – did all that....

¹²When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” ¹³So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.

Every year, Canadians buy too much food, so a lot of it goes to waste – 2.2 million tonnes of it, according to the National Zero Waste Council – want to do your bit to fight climate change – buy less food and waste as little as possible

Quirks and Quarks, the science program on CBC recently had a feature on the effects of global warming on the world’s fish populations – as the oceans, rivers and lakes get warmer, fish can no longer thrive, and they die. As well, this puts more demand for fish worldwide, with the result that there is not enough for people in the country of origin. For them it is not a luxury, it is their food source so their nutrition suffers because people on the other side of the world like to eat fish...maybe if we eat a bit less of it, there will be more for them

Five loaves and two fish...we've known for a long time that there is not a world food shortage problem...there is a world food distribution problem. To solve that takes political will and macro action. Yet, each and every day, small pockets of people do what they can to mitigate hunger and food security issues in their local community, with organizations like the Gospel Mission, planting community gardens, setting up neighbourhood pantries and fridges with a "give some-take some" mandate, to name a few. We might not be able to fix the big problem, but we can each in our own way do some of these smaller pieces.

¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." ¹⁵When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Jesus didn't feed those people for power or glory, or to show off...he fed them because they were hungry: all he said was, *"Make the people sit down."*

Never underestimate the power of the gift of hospitality. We've had to pretty much put it on hold during the pandemic, but now as we emerge, and as you feel comfortable – invite someone to your deck or backyard or even

to a local coffee shop, for with mouth hunger and food hunger, also comes spiritual and emotional hunger. Again, you will not solve the world's problems, but you will contribute one tiny piece to Christ's vision of feeding the world by feeding those closest to you.

*You are the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
your holy word the truth that rescues me.
Give me to eat and live with you above;
teach me to love your truth, for you are love.*

In the words of Paul to the Ephesians of another time and place, yet equally troubled with feeding the hunger they saw around them:

.¹⁸I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth,¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

As was mentioned in the introduction to the service today, today's Gospel is the first of what is known as the "Bread of Life" discourses - five Sundays dedicated to Jesus as the bread of life.

You have five loaves and two fish, and you have five weeks – in the spirit of the Olympics – on your marks, get set, go – see what you can come up with in the next five weeks to feed the world....

Amen.

Service Element / Rite

The familiar words of the psalm lend themselves to a litany that can remind us how very much we have, relative to many people around the nation and world, including some in our community. Consider using this litany for a period during the summer months.

You nourish us, O Lord, with the fruits of the harvest.

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.

You have populated the Earth and the seas.

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.

Vines and trees, bushes and plants, all grant us what we need.

You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

We give you thanks, O God, for all you have provided.

You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

For farmers and farm workers, we give you thanks.

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.

For those who work to preserve and prepare the food, we give you thanks.

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.

For those who transport it, and those who sell it, we give you thanks.

You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

Make us ever grateful, O Lord God, for all that you have given us.

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.

You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing. Amen.