

Reading Matthew 14:13-21

¹³ When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

¹⁶ Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

¹⁷ “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

¹⁸ “Bring them here to me,” he said. ¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children

Teaching

Recently I’ve been having picnics throughout the week with various different families throughout our church... and it’s been great – I love sitting outside on a blanket enjoying the sunshine, of course – we had a picnic basket full of goodies, in fact, probably full of too much food, There was great company ...and sharing stories of random phobias amongst other things (that I had no idea were even real!).

But I love a good picnic and if you fancy meeting for one please message me!

And today I want to share with you about a large group of over 5000 people who had the most famous picnic of all time... they may have had a blanket and sat outside enjoying the warm sun, they definitely had great company, sadly, they forgot the picnic basket and food...but they most certainly had a great story to share when it was time to go home!

We may have heard this story hundreds of times, but I feel there is lots that we can learn about ourselves and the character of God.... So I ask you to not switch off but to tune in ... ask God to speak directly to you through this story.

Have you ever felt that life can be a bit too much sometimes and you just want to be alone? ... My husband Luke is very different to me – I rarely want to be alone – no matter what... but Luke’s an introvert... he loves his alone time And at the beginning of this story Jesus had just heard the news that his cousin John the Baptist had been beheaded – I’m sure he

was devastated and had had enough of teaching people about God's love and doing miracles – understandably, he just wanted some alone time but we're told that he got into a boat and when he had landed on the shore – he got out and saw a large crowd of people who had followed him on foot from all the towns... and he could've said – “go away, leave me alone... I've done my miracles for today... I'm done, come back tomorrow!” but he didn't we're told he had compassion on them and healed their sick... even though Jesus was human as well as God and was probably feeling upset and angry about the death of his cousin... he saw the needs of people – and he had compassion... we are a people who sometimes don't see the needs of others, the people didn't see that Jesus was hurting and upset, they just knew they needed him... they needed his help....

And regardless of how he was feeling- he had compassion - our god is full of compassion.

That's the first thing I want us to remember - in our time of need – God will not forsake us... he may not answer our prayers as we would always like.... But he loves you very much and is compassionate! This made me think of all the times I was at church or not! And wasn't necessarily “feeling it” so I didn't want to worship... but God doesn't deserve our love because we feel it... He deserves it because of who he is and what he's sacrificed to save us.

So already there's plenty to write home about and we're not even at the picnic yet!! It was getting late and the disciples had great intentions – they saw the need of the people and was worried about them being hungry, And the only way they could think to help these people was to send them away to buy some food at the surrounding villages... (and I imagine they were hungry and wanted to get themselves some food)

But I just love Jesus' response of “You feed them!” I wonder if he really wanted to say – “do you still not understand who I am, You've spent months with me, you've seen me do miracles, you've seen me raise people from the dead... in fact, you yourselves have been given authority to also do miracles – to heal the sick, raise the dead.... I'm tired, my cousin is dead and I just want to be alone.... Surely you can feed these people!”

I love how patient Jesus is with his disciples... when they are told to go feed the people I imagine them saying something like – “umm we've searched for food and all we could find was this little packed lunch from this little boy (who's mum was very clever to pack him a lunch!!) its only 5 fish and two loaves.... “I imagine they may even have been a little bit smug about it all.... Thinking “I knew he'd ask us to do something like that so we searched for food and didn't find much... ha... let's see what he thinks now” They were trying to do it in their own strength! God is so patient with us! He's given us his word so that we might know him, he's given us the gift of the Holy spirit so that we might proclaim his love and have the power of God with in us... So we never have to do anything in our own strength....

And yet how often do we forget who God really is... I mean, yes we know he's God... But he is the creator God The all-powerful God who spoke things into being He is God – who can do whatever he wants according to his will...

Just as Jesus was patient with the disciples - God is so patient with us! He's endlessly teaching us, reminding us of his love and the gifts we have, giving us opportunities to show others, even when we turn from him...he knows our thoughts, our pain, our suffering, our desires.... And he is so patient. Personally, I am so grateful for that!

And there are still so many things in this passage that we can learn about God's character. Like, when the disciples gave Jesus the food, he directs the people to sit on the grass...now, this could be because Jesus wants people to see the miracle that's about to happen so they might know it came from God...or that he is just using some common sense – you need order! How can we feed people if they are wandering everywhere...? **We don't worship a god of chaos, but a god of order....**

We came to be by his design ... not something by chance out of chaos... when everything around us may seem to be chaotic and we are struggling to see God.... Stop.... Sit down... be still... and listen for his small calm voice. But finally – the crowd is about to get their picnic Jesus lifts the food to heaven and gives thanks... **our God, who has everything... still, gives thanks... I love that...** It's always good to count our blessings, no matter what we have or don't have and to give thanks to God... And then the miracle happens... The food keeps multiplying.... So much so, that it can feed 5000 men! (that's not to mention the women and children who were also there... so in fact this picnic probably fed many, many more!) You see... we have a God that will take what little you feel you are able to offer him... and will multiply it... **He didn't just feed the people until they had enough... He fed them until they were satisfied...**

We have a God that is more than enough – He will quench your thirst and satisfy your hunger – your hunger for adventure, for purpose, for love, for belonging, for peace, for joy... **We have a God, whom we can trust will satisfy you and in return He asks that you give him what little you have...**

And that's what I want to challenge you with today.... Are you spent? worn out? feeling like you have very little to give? God only asks for what you have... He is patient and compassionate, He understands how you feel and the situation you may find yourself in...you don't have to wait until you are in a place to be more than you are right now...God says "give me what little you have and watch me multiply" ...

I came to Jesus a year after my mother had passed away.... In that year I was angry, hurt, sad, felt rejected and was disappointed in God.... but in Him I promise you...you will find joy, peace, hope, love, compassion, forgiveness, understanding, belonging, purpose... and so much more... **So I ask you to Stop searching in all the wrong places for the things you think will satisfy you... and take a leap of faith... turn to God with your anger and pain, your confusion and your questions...be still, give God whatever you have, no matter how broken or small, and welcome his Holy Spirit into your life that he might begin ...or continue, a great work in you! and that you might find everything you need, and more, in Him.**