

Sermon 2 August 2026 Preacher AG

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer

There was a lot of talk about food in our readings today. Isaiah started with Hear, everyone who thirsts; come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! An invitation to simply bring your trust and faith and receive what God has to give you.

The psalm, Psalm 145 tells us (or at least the one from my bible) that the Lord is good to all, when our eyes look to Him, He gives us our food in due season, and He satisfies the desire of all living things.

And then there is Matthew's recounting of the feeding of the 5000.

Did you know that the story of the Feeding of the 5000 is written in all four Gospels? There are some slight variations, for example where the 5 loaves and 2 fish came from, but all four tell the same story. Why – what was so important about a crowd being miraculously fed.

My first question though, was asking why Jesus withdrew from his work and wanted to be alone. Jesus had just found out that his cousin, John the Baptist, had been murdered by Herod. A lifelong relationship had been severed. In today's parlance - time to take some compassionate leave.

But when the crowds heard where he had gone they followed him on foot from the surrounding towns. Smacks a bit of how groupies behave when their favourite star (who, for private reasons), drops off their radar. And that star will tell you that the fan grapevine is large and persistent. It seems Jesus had become what, in our generation, we might call a super star. People of all ages and nations flock to hear him speak and teach and to seek healing.

However, Matthew tells us that, seeing the great crowd that had gathered, Jesus had compassion for them and cured the sick. Thus continuing the work he had started, when after 40 days in the wilderness, he began to proclaim, '*Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near*', had gathered his disciples, and begun his healing ministry.

Of course, another thing that passionate groupies tend to do when obsessed with connecting with their favourite superstar, is they rush to where the grapevine has suggested they may connect with him or her, but don't think about their physical needs in their haste. And don't forget, the 5,000 people in this report are just the men. We have no idea how many women and children had accompanied them.

So as night was falling his disciples suggested to Jesus that "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.

The disciples were being practical. Despite witnessing many miracles, the mundane necessity of feeding people who have followed Jesus. on foot, from a wide area over considerable distances and were unlikely to have packed a picnic – was easily resolved by sending them away to the surrounding villages to buy food for themselves. It wasn't something that required prayer or a miracle – just common sense.

But you can almost hear the sigh as Jesus told them, *no, they don't need to go away. You give them something to eat!* Their response was "*but we only have five loaves and 2 fish and if we are to go and buy food it would cost a fortune!*" (we today would probably have started with "*Are you mad?*"). But Jesus just said, *bring the five loaves and two fish to me.*

And so, as we know, Jesus ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled. The disciples took up what was left over of the broken pieces and there were twelve baskets full.!

Wow. From little things big things grow. And maybe that is why Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all tell this tale. Maybe

I confess, I read a considerable number of commentaries on this passage over the past week (*thank you Google*) to try to understand why this act of feeding is so important?

The answers that struck a chord with me were

Faith and action. The disciples were asked to distribute the food, perhaps showing that human cooperation with divine action is essential. Even small contributions, like the five loaves and two fish, can be multiplied when offered to God

The story encourages us to bring our own “loaves and fishes” — our talents, resources, or acts of kindness - bring them to God, trusting that He can multiply them to meet greater needs in the world.

Divine compassion and provision: The miracle illustrates Jesus’ care for both the physical **and** spiritual needs of people. He responded to the crowd’s hunger with compassion and provided way beyond what was needed or expected.

It seems to me that most often in our lives, when we believe God wants us to do something large, we start looking at the limited resources that we have and bemoan that we can’t do more. This is the same response as when Jesus told His disciples to give the crowd something to eat. *But we only have five loaves of bread and two fish. How can we feed all these people with so little?* But what Jesus knew they did have, is what He needed from them. He did not need much to feed the crowd, he needed their faith in Him and the little that they had.

How often do **we** recognise God working in our lives – that confidence that we can do what is needed? That divine compassion and provision. A nudge here, a call to LISTEN!? Or a moment when things go right and you think ‘*how lucky am I?*’ and in the next moment know that, instead of thinking *well done me*, you should be giving thanks to God for the blessing received, the prayer answered.

So back to my first question – why is a story about a crowd being fed - one that is told at Sunday Schools, at Messy Church, in religious instruction at schools, debated at Bible study groups, and included in the Lectionary more often than most, so important that it is in all four gospels?

In summary, this account demonstrates Jesus’ compassion, divine power, and the principle that even small offerings can be multiplied to meet great needs. It serves as both a historical miracle and a spiritual lesson, inspiring faith, generosity, and trust in God’s provision.

Yes, our Lord will provide. Perhaps not as we envisioned or even hoped, but rest assured, He will provide.