

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY



Sunday services: 9.30am Holy Communion at Astley church
11.00am Holy Communion at Clive church

Opening hymn: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=praise+to+the+lord+the+almighty+youtube&docid=608032885088718112&mid=2CB785441E85A72717312CB785441E85A7271731&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>

Sunday Readings: Genesis 32:22-31

The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.



Matthew 14:13-21 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "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." Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he 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; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.





Our reflection for this Sunday is kindly done by Kath Evans

They all ate and were satisfied. What a satisfying statement that is and wouldn't it be good if everyone in the world could identify with it? Unfortunately for many reasons that is not the case but on this occasion it is true for those listening to Jesus on that hillside. What do you do if you are suddenly confronted with unexpected guests that you haven't catered for? Or if you are running a function and people turn up you weren't expecting. I don't know about you but I would probably panic for a while then go and check out the freezer or the store cupboard to see how I could stretch out the food. Alternatively we might have to serve smaller helpings. I remember in 2004 when John and I took a group of caravanners on a trip round Northern Ireland and one night we all went to a local Ceilidh dance. We ended up doubling the number present (there were about 32 of us all together and that was the

usual number who attended). They spent some time dashing up and down to the local garage/shop to buy in extra food and milk to feed us all during the break. They also had to scrounge extra chairs and cups etc. but they coped and a jolly good time was had by all even if I did have to sing for my supper. They even asked us if we could go again the next week! I am glad I wasn't one of the organisers.

So you can imagine the thoughts of the disciples in our reading from Matthew today when Jesus turned their question back on them and told them to feed the people themselves. The disciples were ready to send everyone away but Jesus had other ideas. Apart from the story of the resurrection this is the only miracle story that is told in all four Gospels so was obviously considered a very important miracle.

It teaches us at least three things.

a) Although Jesus was very tired and needed to rest, he still recognised a need in others and had compassion for them when the disciples would have sent them away. **"God cares"** They were concerned with the enormity of the task and the cost of feeding so many. What opportunities for Christ do we miss when we don't have time for someone or become impatient when interrupted or are too selfish to share what we have.

b) Jesus could have easily fed the people by His power but instead distributed what food there was to the disciples and used them to then distribute it amongst the crowds. Remember that in the bible only the men were counted and quite likely the total number fed could have been at least treble when you count women and children. Jesus worked through the hands of the disciples and he still does that today. They only appeared to have a small amount of food available but this became sufficient to feed everyone with some left over.

Jesus tells us - "Come to me as you are, however ill-equipped; bring to me what you have, however little, and I will use it greatly in my service." **Little is always much in the hands of Christ.**

All the fragments were gathered up after they had eaten and there were twelve baskets left. It was not wasted and left on the ground. We should not waste our resources neither must we count the cost.

A quotation from Tom Wright reads: *"If you sense a call to follow Him, to share his compassion, to give Him what you have so that it can be used in His service, you must remember that it cost Him everything as well."*

c) Was the miracle simply Jesus multiplying the bread and fish; was it a spiritual feeding as at the Eucharist where they had just a little and were satisfied with the spiritual feeding of Christ; or was it that as Jesus began to share the five loaves and three fishes that others who before had been selfishly holding on to what they had with them were changed and began to share their food with those around them? We are given our bread to distribute to the people; the Word of God, that is our daily bread. In the Lord's prayer we pray "Give us this day our daily bread" He produces enough for us each day with enough left over to share with others. He gives us enough grace to cope with each day and any trials we face.

"My Grace is sufficient for you" he told Paul when he asked Him to remove the thorn in his side.

When Christ is there, the weary find rest and the hungry soul is fed. **So our third lesson is to be selfless not selfish.**

As I was rereading one of my books from sometime ago it contained a story of an act of selfishness changed to selflessness when others were in need. Corrie Ten Boom and her sister were in prison for helping Jews escape from the Gestapo and were living in terrible conditions. They had managed to smuggle in with them a small bottle of vitamin drops that her sister needed because of her poor health.. Corrie's first thought was to hide them and save them for her sister but her sister disagreed. So they shared the drops sparingly with all those in need in their dormitory (and again this was no small number) and this little bottle kept supplying drop after drop as needed until such time as more resources became available through one of the prison staff who was sympathetic.

Then again we have the story of the widow's holder that kept producing oil so long as she was sharing it with Elijah and others. (I Kings 17:8-16). No matter how small our resources seem to be, if we use them for Christ and for the benefit of others then it is amazing how far they will stretch.

We need to:

- show compassion to others
- remember that God's power is limitless
- allow Christ to use us and our resources no matter how small, be prepared to share what we have with others in need.

Then perhaps we can say with all sincerity: **"They all ate and were satisfied"**.

Hymn: There's a wideness in God's mercy <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=theres+a+wideness+in+Gods+mercy&&view=detail&mid=B4457BF7885EABDC3142B4457BF7885EABDC3142&&FORM=VRDGAR>

