

# Reflection

For Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2020

Trinity 8

By Julie Willingham



## **A Reflection on Matthew 14.13-21**

The concept of transformation runs throughout the gospels. We remember Jesus' first miracle that transforms water into wine, many others follow and then later his greatest sign to the world will be the tearing down of the Temple, and rebuilding it in three days – in other words, Jesus' death and resurrection will transform our approach to God.

If Jesus' ministry is one of transformation, the Church today is also called to be a part of this transformational work and the feeding miracle helps us to understand what it means.

It shows Jesus as the supplier of human needs and it sets the stage for His testimony that He is the Bread of Life. Here was the one who could rescue the diseased from their ailments, the one who offered reassurance of God's love for the unloved; security to those rejected by society and here he would feed hungry bodies with nourishment created by a miracle.

In today's story we see that Jesus is clearly at the centre, He defines the task in hand but then, in accomplishing this, he includes his followers around him in his work. He involved his disciples, looking for their response to the situation after telling them to feed the crowd. Notice how His style is collaborative. These days, in church, we talk a lot about working collaboratively but this story shows us that it's not really such a new approach to ministry!

So, we read that the disciple's initial response to this situation had been to send the crowd away. How could they minister to the needs of so many? And yet that is precisely what Jesus challenged them to do. After taking a quick survey of the situation, the disciples quickly reminded him of the poverty of their resources, nothing but five loaves and two fish.

At this point, Jesus instructs them, to bring these to him and He blessed and broke the loaves, and gave it to the disciples who then gave it to the crowd. In feeding a multitude Jesus used the smallest of gifts to accomplish one of the greatest miracles recorded in the gospels. By taking the little they bring, He shows the disciples they have more than enough to feed the hunger of the crowd.

Jesus is still at the centre of transformational life of the church today; and he wants to involve us in his work. Just as he drew in the disciples then, so he calls us to draw alongside him now. He urges us to search our hearts for our own responses in

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different situations, to seek for ourselves the answers and he wants us to work with Him to achieve the desired outcome of feeding those who are hungry with the food of the gospel.

And so often we see the magnitude of the task and our answer is like the disciples. Sometimes when we are faced with people's needs, we look at our own resources and believe we have nothing to give. What can we do? But If we really believe that Jesus is still in the business of transformation, we should not limit what God can do in our own lives by assuming what is and what is not possible by our own estimation.

This year has been such a challenging time for us all. Many people feel tired, anxious, overwhelmed by all that has happened. We may feel we are running on empty with nothing at all to give. But the smallest offering can be such a blessing for someone in need. A cup of tea, a listening ear, a shoulder to cry on can be just the right kind of offering for someone longing to hear a word of encouragement or needing to feel that somebody cares. The disciples could not have known that in bringing such a small offering of food, they held the key to a miracle in the feeding of a multitude.

Jesus will bless whatever we give in terms of time, ability and resources and can multiply their effectiveness way beyond our expectations. He can transform our offering into something much greater and we may have no idea how powerful this might become.

Jesus is the Bread of Life. We who receive the living Bread of Heaven, are to help in distributing and sharing this bread. We are called to feed people's minds with the truth he preached and to feed their hearts with the compassion he lived. As we do so, more and more bread will come from the Hand of Christ to be shared amongst the people.

In our world, there is a great hunger today for human dignity, kindness, and justice. There are so many people weary of life's pressures and pains; so many lacking sustenance to cope with the harsh realities of life. Jesus came among people to satisfy the deepest hungers of every human heart and many who approached Him were changed; their lives transformed.

May He draw us closer to Himself and involve us in His transformational work. May He lead and strengthen us to bring the living bread to a waiting world, the food of reconciliation, peace, and joy which He alone can give to the full.

Amen.