

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Jesus has leftovers!

For the next 5 weeks, our lectionary takes us on a journey through John 6. Today we have heard the feeding of the 5000. This miracle appears in each of the 4 gospels, you have undoubtedly heard many sermons on this text and perhaps from many different angles. Today we are going to focus on the abundance of the food supplied and connect that to the other readings.

Jesus has leftovers!

Pray

Jesus has leftovers!

Hear the words the disciples spoke as Jesus tested their faith in him as the meal was prepared.  
<sup>7</sup>Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get **a little.**” John 6:7 (ESV) Let's paraphrase what Philip is saying, ‘Jesus, we are not feeding these people today. Even if we had 200 days' wages, we couldn't give them enough to be considered a snack, whatever happens, these people are going to be disappointed!’

The conversation with the disciples continues: ‘Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him,  
<sup>9</sup>“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, **but what are they for so many?**”’ John 6:8–9 (ESV). Five little loaves, maybe they were the young boy's meal, potentially they were the disciple's meal. But they are nothing for so many people.

This mirrors the reading we heard from 2 Kings with Elisha. Here we find a man with 20 loaves but 100 men to feed and how does he respond, “How can I set this before a hundred men?” 2 Kings 4:43 (ESV). To paraphrase, ‘What is wrong with you Prophet Elisha? There is so little here that these men will think that I am disrespectful for even offering them my pittance of bread.’

When our faithlessness can only see little, God can do much. He is an abundant God, he is not interested in how little we think we have; he is interested in how much he wants to give.

In 2 Kings the story concludes, ‘And they ate and **had some left.**’ 2 Kings 4:44 (ESV). The psalmist also knows how much God has to give, ‘You open your hand; you **satisfy** the desire of every living thing.’ Psalm 145:16 (ESV). The disciples also must realise what Jesus can do and how much God has to give. ‘And when they had **eaten their fill**, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” <sup>13</sup>So they gathered them up and **filled twelve baskets** with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.’ John 6:12–13 (ESV).

Can you imagine the sheer absurdity of this abundance? 5 loaves and two fish that might have only been a snack for 12 people is now 12 full baskets. There is more at the end than there was at the beginning! The leftovers are larger than the original meal and all the people have **eaten**

**their fill.** They have had an elegant sufficiency, or as my family used to manipulate this phrase, an elephant sufficiency.

The feeding of the 5000 or any of the other feeding miracles does not depict a crowd who only ate a little so that everyone could share. Like those families who always divide the birthday cake by the number of eaters, so that if it is a large gathering the pieces are small and if it is a small gathering the pieces are large. Everyone ate their fill.

This highlights God's abundance. He has much to give. We should expect the creator of the universe, who can call from nothing, everything, can multiply, expand, and enlarge even the smallest of meals. Like the magician whose handkerchief turns into a rainbow of fabric, God has more to give than we can ever imagine, he has leftovers.

God's blessings are not limited to feeding miracles. We should see that these events recorded in 2 Kings and the Gospels are miracles. God has intervened to save his people. We will see this repeatedly over the coming weeks in Exodus, with the manna and quails, and in 1 Kings with Elijah's forty-day journey on food he did not prepare. God provides food in miraculous ways for his people. We should realise that this demonstrates God's abundance for us in our regular daily bread and especially in our spiritual life. God has more to give you than you can ever imagine, and he has leftovers.

He even gives us his own son, to suffer and die for us so that we can belong to him. As Paul writes to the Ephesians, 'so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the **breadth and length and height and depth**, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that **surpasses knowledge**, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.' Ephesians 3:17–19 (ESV). God has so much to give you.

When did we decide that Jesus didn't have enough, or wasn't enough or that he might run out? Like the disciples, we live in this season of doubt and think that God no longer wants to bless us. Let's apply this to some very real situations in our congregations.

We focus and obsess over not having enough money to finance our parish. But Jesus shows us in these readings today that he has an abundance to give us and there will be leftovers. Perhaps what we should learn here is the same thing the disciples had to learn with the bread, once they started giving it away, then the bread really started flowing. Maybe we just need to give our money away and see if God still supplies all we need. Or perhaps we could look at it this way, God has allowed us to build up contingency funds and now is the rain day to use those funds. When those wells run dry we can see if God has really blessed us or if he has abandoned us.

We have a focus on not enough people in the pew, in the congregation, in the parish. Jesus says he's more than enough for us. Perhaps we actually have too many people in the pew, or perhaps God wants us to go and find others to be in the pew with us. Maybe he keeps bringing new people into our building so that we connect with them and keep them in the pew with us.

Perhaps Jesus wants us to realise how much he has already given to us and go and share that. We're not just talking about money or people here, because the most important thing that God has given us is Jesus. We have Jesus! Jesus is abundant, he's not running out, and he grows as he is shared. You have Jesus, he has you! You belong to him, he has marked you, he has named you, he cares for you like a tender shepherd, and he feeds you with abundant food. Food that is supposed to be shared. This is why the viability committee gave you a relatively simple and vanilla recommendation: talk to each other and share Jesus with one another, then see what happens.

In the wider church, we have a focus on not enough pastors. But Jesus says he will set shepherds over us to feed us and provide for our spiritual care. And what we've learnt today is that Jesus fills us up and there are leftovers. This must also apply to his undershepherds. Perhaps the problem here is that we are greedy and don't want to share our shepherds. It may be that we have been unfaithful in the past and have not sent the required number of young men to study to be our pastors. It could also be that we could arrange our congregations in a more efficient way, or even move whole groups of people to access pastors, but we don't want to do this because we are too attached to our buildings.

Whatever the cause of the problem regarding our finances, attendance, and pastor shortage, when we find that we have been unfaithful we should repent and receive God's forgiveness, he has plenty to give. His forgiveness does not run out, we have no cause to put Jesus back on the cross, he died once for all. When our sin is showing, he calls us to repent and believe. Jesus wants us to be at peace and he has an abundance of peace to give. If we have Jesus, we have more than enough of the things we think we lack.

Jesus has not abandoned us. Even when we are out on the lake and the storm is coming and he's not there because he's away praying (doing what we should be doing), He has not abandoned us. Even when he comes to us and gives us what we need and we're still frightened, He has still not abandoned us. Like the disciples needed to realize that the bread wasn't running out, we need to realize that Jesus isn't empty, He's not finished, He's not running out.

But He needs to be shared. He needs to be shared. He wants us to share him with one another. He wants us to share him outside this building, he's not going to run out. He fills all things, he promises to be with us always, he's not running out, He's not empty, His life hasn't gone dry, He wants to feed us, he wants to feed this world with himself, he wants to feed this city with his Word. Why do we behave as if he has run out, as if we've got nothing to give? Why? This is unfaithful. We must repent. We must again be reminded that Jesus is leftovers.

A note here about faith. Do you notice that the majority of the healing miracles of Jesus highlight the faith of the recipient? In this feeding miracle, faith is apparently absent. There is no mention that the crowd expects to be fed, or that they even want to be fed, but Jesus does it anyway. There is no indication the disciples believe Jesus can do what is needed, they think the food is scarce, but Jesus feeds the people anyway. Jesus is so abundant that he feeds the people with a miracle even if they don't want or expect it. He even saves those who do not

know they need it and those who actively persecute him. He suffers and dies even for the evil person, for Judas, for the criminals mocking him, for the crowd who condemned him, for Pilate, for the scribes, Pharisees, and priests, and even for the soldiers who executed him. They never receive the benefit if they don't trust it is for them, but that didn't stop Jesus from doing the work for them. Just like the crowd didn't receive the benefit of the bread if they refused to reach out their hand in faith to eat, nor did the disciples receive the benefit if they didn't start breaking that measly loaf in their hand and sharing it. Faith in this story is not absent at all, but it is not highlighted.

Your God, the only God, has much to give. He gives us our daily bread in abundance. He gives us his dear Son, he gives us faith to trust in him, and he gives us example after example of his great love for us, both in his word and also in our daily lives. If you are not satisfied with what he is providing, eat up, he's got plenty more to give you.

Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all our understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.