

## Sermon Friends of Creation Week 2: Climate and Food

Our sermon is based on resources from CLWR's Friends of Creation and a gospel commentary by Jennifer T Kaalund, Associate Professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

In today's gospel reading, we hear a story of one of Jesus' most known miracles. Five loaves of bread. Two fish. Well over 5000 people fed. And 12 baskets of leftovers. Incredible!

Matthew had earlier recorded that Jesus had been travelling "throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people" (Matthew 4:23). As a result of Jesus' ministry, large crowds follow him.

In today's reading, Jesus leaves the crowd and takes refuge in a boat, and once again the people follow him. Upon seeing the crowd, Jesus feels compassion for them. And because he cares for them, he is compelled to act and he continues healing them.

Apparently Jesus' healing had taken a great deal of time because his disciples come to him and suggest that he send the crowd away. The disciples' request is not malicious. They are simply aware of their location (a deserted place) and the time (the day has turned into evening) and the reality that the crowd is becoming hungry.

Jesus says to the disciples, " 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish'" (Matthew 13:16). Jesus challenges their request: Why should they leave when the disciples have food?

What a remarkable detail! Instead of commanding them people to leave, Jesus orders them to stay and sit down on the grass. He then gets to work attending to their needs. He does not focus solely on their spiritual health through his teaching. He is also concerned that they are sick and they are hungry.

Are Christians today as concerned about the physical health of God's people as Jesus is? And even if we are aware, do we, like the disciples, hesitate to act when we think our resources are too limited to have an impact?

There is still a need to feed the hungry in our world today. According to The UN World Food Program, approximately "343 million people estimated to be acutely food insecure across the 74 countries where the program operates."

This month we are focusing on one area of need, the Lake Chad region in Central and West Africa. Once full of fish, farmland, and fruit-bearing trees, this area has long sustained families who rely on farming, fishing, and livestock to survive.

But today, the land is struggling.

Since the 1960s, Lake Chad has shrunk by 90%. The climate is changing. Rainfall is harder to predict. Growing seasons are shorter. Soils are degraded. Overgrazing and deforestation are turning fertile ground into desert. Crops are failing. Food is disappearing.

And when food disappears, so much else begins to fall apart. Children leave school. Families lose their income. Malnutrition spreads. People are pushed into desperation. This is more than a food crisis—it's a crisis of survival.

But the story does not end here.

Through the Friends of Creation project, CLWR is working with farmers and families in the Lake Chad Basin to rebuild food systems in ways that are sustainable, just, and full of dignity. That includes training farmers in techniques that protect the soil, retain water, and improve harvests—even as the climate changes.

The project also supports assisted natural regeneration—helping native trees and shrubs return to the land. Their deep roots hold soil in place, slow down rainfall, and help the ground absorb and store water. Alongside this, trees like Moringa, Acacia albida, neem, and shea are being planted, offering long-term sources of food, income, and healing for the land.

Better livestock and fishery practices are also being introduced, so that communities can continue producing food in ways that respect both them earth and the generations to come. God is always re-creating. The land is resilient. And we are invited to take part in the healing.

[Show video: Bishop Susan Johnson's message and prayer on food from Lake Chad (Nuba's story)]

As followers of Christ, we are called to love our neighbours and care for creation. That includes rethinking how we live, how we eat, and how we share. Even the smallest actions—what we grow, what we consume, what we waste—can ripple outward and make a difference. What we do in our kitchens and communities matters across the globe.

Eating less meat, growing more food locally, and reducing waste are all faithful ways to care for God's creation. They reduce emissions, improve soil and water use, and help balance global food systems—so that families in places like Lake Chad have a better chance to thrive.

And we can do even more when we act together. This is why we are joining with churches across Canada and CLWR to offer our loaves and fishes to support this work in Lake Chad. Our gifts can be the "little" resources (like that of the disciples) that, when blessed and added with others, can bring forth an increase

In God's kingdom of compassion, people share their resources, and there is more than enough for everyone. And when we care for creation, we care for each other. As people of faith, we are called to till and keep the earth—not only so that we may be fed, but so that all may be fed.

Let us pray. God of Abundance,  
we lift up farmers whose seasons are shifting and whose soil is tired.  
Be near to those planting in hope, despite failed rains and shrinking harvests.  
Bless the hands learning to care for the earth –  
with methods that heal the land,  
and knowledge sown in the field and shared with the village.  
May each seed planted in hope bear fruit in justice.  
Guide us in this challenge to honour your creation and feed your people. Amen.

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-18/commentary-on-matthew-1413-21-4>