

More Than Enough

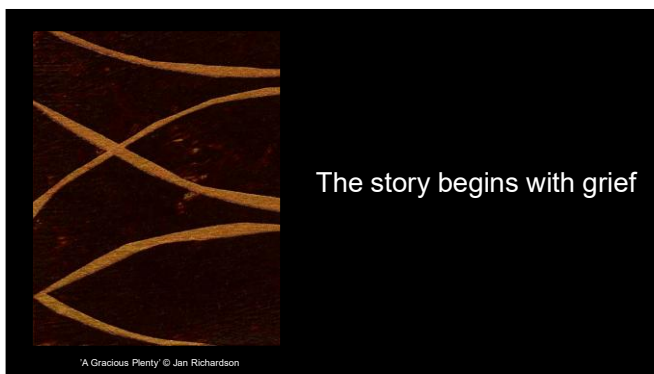
Bible reference for sermon Matthew 14:13-21

¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, we come to you with hands that often feel empty and hearts that are sometimes weary. Feed us again with your grace, so that we may discover your abundance and become bread for the world. Amen.

I wonder what your first thought is most mornings. Not the one you say out loud. The quieter one underneath. For many of us it sounds something like this: "Will I have enough?" Enough energy for the day. Enough money for the next bill. Enough patience for that difficult conversation. Enough strength for another doctor's appointment. Enough hope after watching the evening news. Sometimes, if we're really honest, enough faith. Scarcity has a way of becoming the soundtrack of our lives. It whispers that there isn't enough to go around, so we'd better hold tightly to what we have. And the strange thing is that we can believe that lie even when we have far more than most people in the world.



Perhaps that is why this story continues to speak with such freshness. Because it doesn't begin with abundance. It begins with grief. In the previous few verses, Matthew tells us that Jesus has just heard about the execution of John the Baptist.

John wasn't simply another prophet. He was family. He was the one who had baptised Jesus. He was the voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way for the Messiah. Now he has been murdered because he dared to tell the truth to a ruler who preferred comfort over justice. So Jesus gets into a boat and heads for a deserted place. Honestly, who could blame him?

Sometimes we imagine Jesus moving serenely through life, untouched by ordinary human emotions. But the Gospels won't let us believe that. Jesus grieves. Jesus gets tired. Jesus needs time alone. There is something deeply comforting about that. Because there are moments when we all long for a deserted place—a quiet place to catch our breath after bad news, after disappointment, after loss, after simply carrying too much for too long. Yet the crowds find him. Of course they do. They're sick. They're anxious. They're desperate. They're searching. They're hungry in more ways than one.

And then comes a beautiful sentence: "He had compassion for them." Not annoyance. Not frustration. Not, "I just need some space." Compassion. The Greek word Matthew uses is wonderfully earthy. It describes something that happens deep inside a person. Your heart twists. Your stomach turns. Someone else's pain becomes impossible to ignore.



Jesus doesn't simply notice suffering. He feels it. And that matters. Because there are days when we wonder whether God really notices the suffering of this world. Another war. Another flood. Another act of violence. Another family struggling to pay the rent. Another elderly neighbour sitting alone. Another frightening diagnosis. Does God see? Matthew answers before we've even asked the question. Yes. God sees. God's heart is moved. Compassion isn't simply something Jesus does. Compassion is who God is. That is where this miracle begins. Not with bread. With compassion.

Jesus spends the day healing people. Eventually evening arrives, and the disciples approach him with what sounds like a perfectly reasonable suggestion. "Send the crowds away." They're not being uncaring. They're being practical. It's late. They're miles from anywhere. People need dinner. This is beyond us. If we're honest, we'd probably have suggested exactly the same thing. When the need becomes overwhelming, one of the easiest responses is simply to send it somewhere else. Someone else can deal with it. Someone with more time. Someone with more money. Someone with more expertise. Someone else.



Jesus gently interrupts their logic.

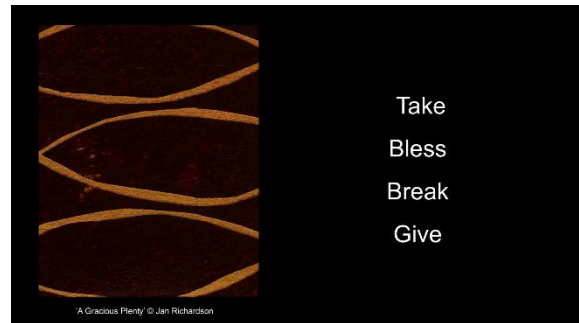
"They need not go away." "You give them something to eat." You can almost hear the silence. Us? Have you counted these people? There are thousands of them.

The disciples take stock. Five loaves. Two fish.

That's all. Or as they put it, "We have nothing... except..." I love that sentence because it sounds remarkably familiar.

"I've got nothing... except a little time." "...except one spare room." "...except a listening ear." "...except one vote." "...except one prayer." "...except an ordinary life." Scarcity teaches us to call our gifts "nothing." Jesus looks at exactly the same bread and fish and sees something entirely different. He doesn't ask whether it's enough. He simply says, "Bring them here to me." Not, "Come back when you've got more." Not, "Return when you're stronger." Not, "Wait until you're more confident." Just... Bring what you've got. Bring your grief. Bring your doubts. Bring your tiredness. Bring your ordinary life. Bring your imperfect faith. Because Jesus has always been remarkably good at working with what people believe isn't enough. Think about the whole story of Scripture. Moses has a shepherd's staff. David has a sling. Mary has a frightened "yes." The disciples have five loaves and two fish. Again and again God seems strangely uninterested in impressive resources. God simply asks people to trust enough to place what they have into God's hands. Perhaps the first miracle in this story isn't that bread multiplies. Perhaps it is that the disciples let go of the little they had.

Then Matthew slows everything down. **Jesus takes the bread.** He looks towards heaven. **He blesses it. He breaks it. He gives it.** Take. Bless. Break. Give. Those actions echo through the rest of Matthew's Gospel. When we hear them again in the upper room on the night before Jesus dies, we recognise them immediately.



Long before Jesus says, "This is my body," he has already been showing his disciples what the kingdom of God looks like. A kingdom where bread is shared. Where nobody is turned away. Where God's generosity overflows. There is another meal in this chapter too. Matthew has deliberately placed these two banquets side by side. Herod's birthday feast has everything that the world admires. Power. Luxury. Important guests. Fine food. Entertainment. Yet it ends with John the Baptist's head carried in on a platter. A banquet of wealth that produces death. Then Jesus prepares another meal. No palace. No servants. No fine furniture. Just grass. Dust. Children. Old people. People carrying sickness and grief. People who would never receive an invitation to Herod's table. Yet this table gives life. One kingdom is built on fear and power. The other on compassion and generosity. One protects privilege. The other feeds whoever is hungry. Matthew quietly asks us: Which table looks more like the kingdom of God?



Then comes one of my favourite details. Jesus doesn't hand the bread directly to the crowd. He gives it to the disciples. The disciples give it to everyone else. Can you imagine them? A few moments earlier they had been convinced there wasn't enough.

Now they are walking through thousands of people with baskets that somehow never empty. I wonder when it dawned on them. Halfway through the crowd? Three-quarters of the way? Did one of them stop, look into the basket and think, "There's still bread!" That's often how grace works. Not with fireworks. Not with dramatic music. Usually we only notice it afterwards. We look back and think,

"I honestly don't know how we survived that year." "I don't know where the strength came from." "I don't know how forgiveness became possible." "I don't know why I didn't give up."

Perhaps the answer is simply this: Christ kept placing bread into our basket. Again. And again. And again. One of the great lies we tell ourselves is that God can only use people who have everything together. Once I'm less anxious... Once I'm more generous... Once my faith is stronger... Once I know all the answers... Then God might use me. The Gospel never says that. Jesus doesn't say, "Come back when you've got twelve loaves." He says, "Bring the five." Bring yourself. Because grace has never depended on extraordinary people. It has always depended on an extraordinarily gracious God.

Matthew finishes with one last detail. There are twelve baskets left over. One for every disciple. I can imagine Jesus smiling as he says, "You thought you were going to run out. Now carry this abundance home." What a gentle lesson. God's generosity is not merely sufficient. It overflows. Not so that we become wasteful. But so that we learn to trust.



This is the economy of God's kingdom. Not fear. Grace. Not scarcity. Abundance. Not clinging. Sharing. That doesn't mean there aren't real shortages in our world. There are. People are hungry. People are lonely. People long for justice. People are displaced by war and climate disasters. Families wonder how they will pay their bills. This miracle doesn't ask us to pretend otherwise. Instead, it reminds us that God's response to human need has always been compassionate people carrying bread.

Sometimes that bread is food. Sometimes it is friendship. Sometimes it is advocacy. Sometimes it is hope. Sometimes it is simply sitting quietly beside someone whose world has fallen apart. The church has never been called to explain away suffering. The church has been called to embody Christ's compassion in the middle of it.

Every Sunday we come to another table. We don't come because we've finally become faithful enough. Or generous enough. Or compassionate enough.

We come because we're hungry. Hungry for mercy. Hungry for forgiveness. Hungry for hope. Hungry for Christ. And every week Jesus does exactly what he did on that Galilean hillside.

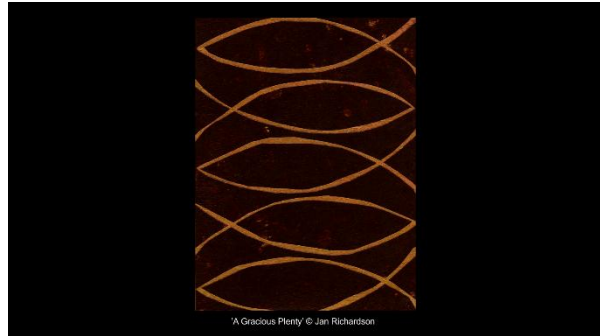
He takes.

He blesses.

He breaks.

He gives.

He places the bread of life into our hands. And somehow there is always enough.



Enough grace for another week. Enough forgiveness for another failure. Enough courage for another act of love. Enough hope for another difficult conversation. Enough strength to begin again. There is always enough Christ. So perhaps that is Christ's invitation to us this week.

Don't worry about becoming extraordinary. Simply take whatever seems small in your life and place it into his hands. Offer your kindness. Offer your listening ear. Offer your prayers. Offer your welcome. Offer your ordinary life. You may discover, as the disciples did, that in the hands of Jesus ordinary things become signs of the kingdom. Because that is what grace does. It takes what looks like "not enough" and reveals the astonishing abundance of God's love. And that abundance is not only for us. It is for every person who is still hungry—for bread, for hope, for justice, for belonging, and for Christ himself.

Amen.

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul's Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>