

Poole Bay Methodist Circuit worship
Sunday 2nd August 2020
Feeding 5000: Sharing Ministry - Led by Rev Nick Wood

Introduction

Good Morning! Nick the Vic here and welcome once again to our audio worship for Sunday 2nd August.

Let's begin with a prayer together:

Opening Prayer

Living God, as we gather together to worship, we thank you that you are already here - and not just here with us in this moment but in every moment and every part of our lives. So help us to listen and to learn; help us to grow in faith, hope and love; help us to recognize your presence and to live each moment conscious that you are by our side, to your praise and glory. **Amen.**

Bible Reading

¹³ When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.

¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

¹⁶ Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

¹⁷ "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

¹⁸ "Bring them here to me," he said.

¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

(Matthew 14: 13-21 NIV)

SERMON - Feeding 5000: Sharing Ministry

Matthew 14: 13-21 (Mark 6: 30-44)

Exodus 18: 13-23

Introduction

A nervous young minister, new to the church, stood up at the front on his first Sunday. Looking out at the congregation he was gripped with nerves and said, "Today we'll be thinking about how Jesus fed five people with five thousand loaves of bread and two thousand fish."

A man in the congregation sitting three rows back sniggered at the minister's mistake, raised his hand and said, "That's not much of a trick, Rev - I could do that myself."

The minister went bright red with embarrassment but didn't respond. However, the next Sunday he got himself together and decided to try again. This time he did it properly, "Today we'll be thinking about how Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish." Smiling, the minister looked towards the heckler from last week and said, "Well, Mr. Perkins, could you do *THAT?*"

The man was un-phased and chirped back, "No problem."

"What do you mean?" said the exasperated minister, "How would you do it?"

The man beamed and replied, "With all the food I had left over from last Sunday!"

The Principle of First Reference

When we read the account of the Feeding of the 5000 in Mark's Gospel (Mark 6: 30-44) we discover that he includes a number of details that Matthew doesn't. One of these details is the fact that, according to Mark the people sat down in groups of 'hundreds and fifties'.

Now you might just think, "Well, big deal! That's not really that important so Matthew just misses it out". But in that case then it's a good thing we have Mark. He is the only Gospel writer who records this detail and gives us a window into what Jesus thought he was doing when he fed the 5000. This is so much more than just an 'eat as much as you like' miracle – there is something far more important going on here.

When the Jewish rabbis (teachers) were trying to interpret a passage of the Hebrew Bible (what we would call the Old Testament) one of the tools they would often use is called the Principle of First Reference.

The rabbis would look back to see where a word, phrase or idea was first used in the Scriptures. They would then use the context and meaning of that first reference to help them understand a later passage.

Now when you take the phrase 'hundreds and fifties' from Mark's account you find there are only 3 other references in the whole Bible – the first two are found in Exodus 18. So I'm going to read to you Exodus 18: 13-24. This is the account of Moses getting a visit from his father-in-law, Jethro. At this time if the people had a problem or an argument they would take it to Moses to sort out and he would spend all day trying to do this for everyone – just him – on his own. It was a very heavy workload and so Jethro had a suggestion for him. I read from verse 13:

¹³ The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening.

¹⁴ When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?"

¹⁵ Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will.

¹⁶ Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and instructions."

¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good.

¹⁸ You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.

¹⁹ Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him.

²⁰ Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave.

²¹ But select capable men from all the people - men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain - and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.

²² Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you.

²³ If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."

(Exodus 18: 13-23 NIV)

Sharing the Task

So when we return to the Feeding of the 5000 we notice that Jesus doesn't do it all himself. He gives thanks and breaks the bread but then he gives it all to his disciples. He trusts them with the distribution of the bread and fish – just like the judges appointed by Moses over the hundreds and fifties. In both texts the people go home satisfied. But who is this miracle really for? I would suggest that it is Jesus' disciples who are the ones who are supposed to get it. A bit like the water into wine at Cana when the result is that the disciples put their faith in him, here the point is not a free feed from Jesus the miracle-worker – it's again targeted at the disciples. In fact, it is the next step in their training programme.

The story is about **sharing the work of ministry**. Jesus entrusts his disciples with the task of ministry. He still does! He spends time with them, mentors them, trains them up and then he sends them out to do it – and he trusts them to get on with it.

Final Thought

In this changed world that we find ourselves living in; as we prepare to be the Church of Jesus Christ in a different way than we had imagined before – our great challenge will be how we share the work of ministry. Jesus came preaching a message of Good News and pretty much the first thing he did was to pick some people to help share it with him. We will need to support one another, to learn from one another and to trust one another as we share together in this same work of ministry.

But God is good and provides abundantly. The 12 baskets left over are meant to spell out in capital letters that the people of Israel (the 12 tribes) can be a blessing and give freely and yet still be satisfied themselves. God's provision is enough for everyone if the blessed ones are prepared to share their blessings. **Amen.**

Prayers of Intercessions

Lord Jesus Christ,
We pray for your Church
and for its ministry to the world.

May we be a source of love, hope and comfort,
compassion, challenge and inspiration.
Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

May your followers in every place find the faith and courage,
vision and commitment,
to live as beatitude people –
people who are blessed so that they may bless others;
poor and humble in spirit,
merciful in attitude,
pure in heart,
hungry for peace and thirsty for righteousness,
and so, as individuals and together,
may your Church testify to your redeeming love
and renewing power.
May we speak through word and deed of your care for all,
your desire for justice,
and your willingness to always be merciful.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We pray for all those who share the work of ministry.
Lord, lead us and guide us to be the Church you would have us be in this day.
Give us the faith and the courage to grapple with the challenges that lie before us;
the ability to listen and discern what you are saying to us
and the strength and resolve to make decisions and act on them.
Help us also to catch a glimpse of the new horizons and fresh opportunities that are presenting themselves.
Help us to see not just what we have left behind
but the promise that stretches out ahead of us.
Help us to share together in the work of Jesus;
that others might hear of our experience of your goodness
and about the difference you make to our lives,
and might meet the living Christ for themselves.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

And so, Lord we pray for our world -
the world in which we live and are called to serve –
the world you gave your life to save -
in all its beauty and brokenness.
We silently lift up before God our cares and concerns.

(silence)

Living Lord God, we place these prayers,
for these, your children, into your loving and capable hands;
in the knowledge that you've heard us and
in the faith that you will answer us
according to your will.
In the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

We share together in the prayer Jesus gave us – The Lord's Prayer:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom,**

**the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn

We are going to finish by singing hymn number 411 in Singing the Faith – *May the God of Hope Go with Us Every Day.*

Please join in if you wish.

Blessing

Finally, let us bless one another with the words of 'The Grace':

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with us all
Evermore. Amen.**

Final Words

For a more light-hearted take on John's version of the Feeding of the 5000 then please check out ***Stories of Hope: No. 5*** (www.nickthevic.co.uk/stories-of-hope).

God Bless you.

Stay safe.

See you soon.

Bye bye.