



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Trinity XXV 2018

John 6.1- 5

8.30 am BCP 1662

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The story of the 'Feeding of the Five Thousand' is one of the most vivid and most memorable in the whole of the New Testament.

Here is a story that almost anyone who has ever been to Sunday School can tell almost without prompting. And it is both a very simple story and a richly complex one.

The story is vivid and catches the imagination; it is very easy to close one's eyes and picture the crowds swarming around Jesus on the hillsides above the Sea of Galilee, one can smell the five barley loaves and the two fish offered by the little boy.

But, what might well have started out with something of a party atmosphere could, all too easily, have turned very nasty as the vast, restless crowd who had enjoyed a really good day

out beside the Sea of Galilee came to realise that not only was it getting late and they were all far from homes, but that they were, more importantly, rather hungry!

Jesus turns aside to his disciples and quietly asks them what they are going to do about the increasingly uncertain mob, knowing full well that they will not come up with any answer, because there is nothing that they can do.

Philip states the obvious, even a king's ransom won't buy enough food to feed everyone, but then Andrew, maybe rather cynically, fetches a small lad and pushes him forward with nothing more than five small rough barley flour loaves and a couple of dried up fish.

Jesus, without hesitating, however, accepts and takes what is offered to him, no matter how seemingly insignificant or ridiculous; into his hands he takes the boy's rancid picnic, blesses it, tears it into pieces and offers it around.

Miraculously, the few loaves and a couple of fish prove to be more than enough to feed everyone. Indeed, in a nice footnote to the story, St John tells us there was enough left over to fill twelve baskets with the scraps!

For St John, the story is key to his whole Gospel and it serves a number of purposes:

First, the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand is John's version of the Last Supper, the Institution of the Holy

Eucharist; it is also one of the all-important 'Signs' by and through which the true nature of Jesus is revealed to Israel.

The story also serves as instruction to the post-Crucifixion-Resurrection-Ascension- Pentecost Church (that includes you and me) that the task of taking care of each other is to be our daily duty and joy. In and through the story we are to know that even in the most unpromising situations, the poorest and most meagre of offerings can if we bring them to Jesus and place them into his hands, be through and by his blessing, become rich and bountiful provision; provision that not only serves its purpose but exceeds what is actually needed.

We might feel we have few talents, precious few gifts, but if we have the courage to place what we have into Jesus' hands, even the most meagre offering will prove to be more than enough to do God's will and reveal God's glory in the world. Amen.