

## **A Movement in the Guts, in the Hands and in the World**

### **9 Pentecost A – Aug 2, 2020**

Matthew 14:13-21

13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. 15 When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." 16 Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." 17 They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." 18 And he said, "Bring them here to me." 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.

*Matthew has told us of the beheading of John the Baptist – killed because he denounced Herod Antipas' marriage to his brother Philip's wife when Philip was still alive (a violation of Jewish law). This is a story of a miracle, but which miracle? The obvious answer is the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, but there is perhaps another miracle here. Matthew places this story in a section of the gospel about training the disciples for their mission, so perhaps Jesus is teaching them about what they can do. (A peasant in Palestine, then and now, travelled with food.) Jesus says to his disciples "you give them something to eat" (v. [16](#)). He is saying: you have the resources to solve this problem! Take the initiative! Be leaders! In v. [19](#), we have a reminder of the Last Supper, the eucharistic feast, and of the messianic feast at the end of time. Jesus takes bread, recognizes it as the Father's gift ("looked up to heaven"), blesses it, breaks it, and gives it, distributes it. Then, in v. [20](#), we see another level to the story. The disciples get everyone to work together to a common purpose. All are "filled" and much is left over: a basket for each disciple. Each of them has a mission to perform, one of telling the good news of the infinite abundance of God's love, which all can eat. © 1996-2020 Chris Haslam;  
<http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/apr18m.shtml?>*

Like many bible stories we may think they're inspirational ....even aspirational but out of our reach, we're not Jesus or one of his disciples and besides this is the 21<sup>st</sup>

century. In order to make the story come alive to us we need to make ourselves alive to the story. So, what do we have in common with Jesus and the people of his day?.....let's start with what happened.

- 1) **COMPASSION:** Jesus is well aware of the difficulties of the day – his cousin (J. the B.) has lost his life speaking his mind. Jesus is raising suspicion about his teachings and activities, but the people are responding and wanting more. Burdened with grief and yet awareness of the people hungry for both bread and soul-food, Jesus is moved by compassion.....a Greek word which literally means, “a movement in the guts.” What moves you about our present-day world? The close to home things.... like finances or relationships OR bigger things like the fact that we are in the midst of a viral pandemic that is killing people, changing how we live and that so many folks are out of work, losing businesses or actually dying? When we make the connection between the “universal” and ourselves we often are able to be more vulnerable to “feeling” the pain involved. Jesus chooses to remain open and connected. Even when the crowd is hungry, he stays with them.....in presence as well as emotionally. Do we choose to remain open to others? How do you remain open to the well of compassion within you?
- 2) **CONNECTION:** The disciples want Jesus to turn the crowds away....to have him turn away...we've seen enough, done enough let's get out of this tough spot. Jesus shows us how God always chooses to stay connected with us, especially when things are difficult and we're starving for some relief. God only brings forward a miracle through Jesus as the people also choose to stay connected and offer something of themselves. A little sharing is blessed and multiplied with God's blessing and becomes how the nations and starving little ones are fed. Compassion moves us inside; connection activates us outside.
- 3) **COMMISSION:** Twelve baskets are gathered of leftovers. The abundance God brings forward from us has always been present to us – it simply needs to be shared.....yet who will do this? The disciples approach this story from a **SCARCITY** mentality – we “only” have..... yet, God comes to us in our desperation and reminds us of God's **ABUNDANCE** – there are 12 Baskets gathered even for others. Being church is being people like Jesus who are Compassionate (moved inside), Connected (acting in behavior outside), and Commissioned (Sent with enough to bring blessings of food and healing to others). What are you aware of receiving from God recently?