

“Feast for All”
By Rev. Frances Savil
Sunday July 28, 2024

John 6:1-21

In the military we talk about food being morale. Troops will put up with a lot of hard work and tough living conditions, and harsh weather without a lot of complaining, but they get really grumpy, really quickly when the food is bad.

We mark special occasions with food. We have special foods for special days. We talk about “comfort food”, food that reminds us of home, or happy times.

When we go to a different country it is wonderful to try different foods, and how different countries cook, but at some point we want the familiar foods of home.

Food can divide us – but it can also bring us together. One of the foundations of our Christian faith is the sacrament of communion. We share bread and wine, we are all fed at our Lord’s table. Food is a basic necessity of life.

This passage from John’s gospel that we read this morning reminds us of communion. Bread is blessed, broken and given to the people by Jesus.

It is a story of grace.

Meals shared are so important.

When we celebrate an anniversary, or a graduation, or a birthday, what do we do?

(we have cake, maybe a special meal).

When we want to go on a date first we might go out for coffee, but when we are truly interested in someone we go for dinner together.

So many of our special memories are situated around food shared.

This meal that the crowd received that day is wholly orchestrated by Jesus.

The crowd is told to sit down, they are at rest.

This is not a meal that they are working for.

This is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet we will share.

Jesus invites us to sit and receive his gifts.

It is all a gift – God’s blessing – it is about what Jesus has done for all of us.

The disciples, with the crowd that day, had a little – a few loaves and a couple fish.

What is that in the midst of so many?

The disciples could only see their own resources.

They had pitifully little in comparison to the needs around them.

They did not reckon what Jesus could do with their gifts.

Friends, miracles come from the blessing of the Lord! Where Gods blessing rests, thousands are fed; where it is lacking much more than two years wages still would not be enough.

The question is not what we do we have in bank, or what gifts or resources do we have, for they will never be sufficient.

The question is what will God do, when we place all we have in the hands in the God.

It's about God's greatness, God's blessing, and God's work, when we place ourselves and the little we have in his hands.

The blessing of God is out of proportion to how we would calculate things.

When 5 loaves provide food for five thousand and twelve baskets of leftovers, that is beyond our understanding, beyond our calculations, it is the great blessing and power of God at work.

It is God working wholly beyond our reckoning revealing the great love of God for us.

Can you picture yourself out in the green field with Jesus and with thousands of others.

Jesus invites us all to be seated – we don't have to do a thing.

This is not our worry and strain.

And Jesus feeds everyone.

We all receive all the food we wanted, our children all received food, everyone cared for, everyone blessed.

The disciples and a young boy got to be part of this miraculous blessing.

Can you imagine seeing the very little you had turn into so much to feed and bless so many.

I'm sure the disciples and that child never calculated things the same way again.

Today we are invited to receive the blessing of God again, to sit at Jesus' feet, and let him feed us, love us, care for us.

But we are also invited to give into God's hands the little we have.

The boy could have kept the little he had, and had his own lunch, but instead he placed into the hands of Jesus, and Jesus blessed a whole community.

Something of the kingdom of God was experienced by everyone that day.

George Herbert has a wonderful poem called "Love Bade Me Welcome"

It speaks of the wonderful invitation of God to come to the table and feast, to sit down in Jesus' presence and be fed, no matter how unworthy we feel.

It begins: "Love/God bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back, Guilty of dust and sin.

But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack

From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked any thing.”

God invites us into this wonderful relationship, and we are afraid, afraid, and shameful, broken, and guilty. And the amazing response of God is to draw nearer to us, and to ask what we lack.

The poem continues with the answer of what he lacks – he lacks being a guest, worthy to be in God’s presence. God’s answer: “Love said, “You shall be he.”

Hebert is not convinced. He says:
“I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
I cannot look on Thee.”
And God’s response:
“Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
“Who made the eyes but I?”

And that is the truth.
God made our eyes, but Lord, I have marred them: let my shame Go where it doth deserve.”

And here is the crux of it for God:
“And know you not,” says Love “Who bore the blame?”
My dear, then I will serve.”
“You must sit down,” says Love, “and taste My meat.”
So I did sit and eat.”

Do you hear the words of Psalm 23?

“**Thou** preparest a table, **You** God prepare a table for *me*, before me in the presence of my enemies. **You** anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows...”

We are loved, refreshed, renewed, and cared for by our great and loving God.

And then we are invited not to stay there, but to go home having experienced a little of the kingdom of God, to share it with others.

At some point Jesus dismissed the crowd, but they had all experienced something miraculous, something of the kingdom of God to share and spread as they went their way.

And to remember that as we share what we have and place it in Jesus’ hands, he can do more than we can ask or imagine with it.

Math in the church is a funny thing.

We have three – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and together they make One God.

Today we have a few loaves, and fish and in Jesus’ hands it becomes a banquet, all are fed, all are satisfied, all are blessed.

Thanks be to God.