

The Bread of Life

A Sermon for the Tenth Sunday After Pentecost

Apostles Anglican Church

2 August 2026

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Main Text: Matthew 14:13-21

Supporting Text: John 6, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:18-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, you gave your Apostles grace truly to believe and to preach your word: Grant that we might love what they believed and preach what they taught through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Introduction

When I was 7 or 8 years old, we lived in an old farmhouse out in the country. It was a great place to grow up, but it was about 45 minutes away from much of anything. You couldn't run down the block and get McDonald's.

But about 10 minutes from our house, at the one traffic light in town, there was a corner store. It was a small place with 2 gas pumps and the regular things you'd find in a convenience store.

Sometimes, while my brother and I were playing around the old farm, we'd get a hankering for a cheeseburger. Now we knew Mom wouldn't take us all the way into McDonald's, but there was that corner store.

They had a frozen cheeseburger wrapped in plastic that you could zap in the microwave right there in the store.

And I'll tell you what, in that moment, when we were hungry, there wasn't much better than that frozen burger, zapped in a dirty gas station microwave.

You'll eat a lot of things when you're hungry.

The people in today's reading from St. Matthew find themselves in a similar situation. The text tells us they are in a “desolate place.” There are no shops where they can buy themselves

something to eat. They don't even have a corner store where they can buy a nasty cheeseburger.

1 — The Feeding of the 5,000

So, the disciples suggest that Jesus should send all the people away so they can go into the villages and buy something to eat.

That's not a bad solution, but Jesus has other ideas.

You see, he didn't come to earth to send people away from him to be fed. He came to draw people to himself so that he can feed them with the bread of life.

But the disciples didn't yet fully understand that.

So, in order to test their faith, he tells the disciples, “Don't send them away; feed them!”

This seems an impossible task to them. Frankly, even today, feeding 5,000+ people at the drop of the hat would be nearly, if not totally, impossible.

I could understand if, at that moment, the disciples were thinking, “He's out of his mind.”

They needed Jesus to see the reality of the situation as they saw it:

1. There were a lot of people,
2. there wasn't enough money to buy food to feed them,
3. and all they had was five loaves and two fish.

But Jesus is about to show them not just what the reality is, but WHO the true reality is.

John, in his account of this miracle, tells us that a boy in the crowd gave the bread and fish to the disciples.

While this might seem insignificant, it's actually important.

Jesus didn't scoff at the insignificance of what was offered; he embraced the gift that came from the faith of this child.

This is the kind of faith that Jesus wants to see in his disciples. Not only from those disciples back then but also from his disciples today.

There isn't anything sufficient enough that we can offer to Jesus. It's always going to be like 5 loaves and 2 fish for 5,000+ people.

And besides that, everything we have came from him in the first place, and everything we give him is already his.

Does that sound familiar? We say it just before we receive the Eucharist. The celebrant says, *“All things come from you, O Lord,”*

And the people respond: *“And of your own have we given you.”*

It's during this time that the offering is brought up and the celebrant blesses it.

While we don't do it here, at many liturgical churches the bread and wine are brought up with the offering.

The people are literally returning to God, gifts of money, bread, and wine.

Gifts he gave to us in the first place.

Here we are, all these years later, placing our insignificant gifts into the hands of Jesus.

And Jesus does today with our gifts of bread and wine, the same thing he did when he fed the 5,000.

Matthew tells us,

[Jesus] taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowd. ¹

Jesus takes the bread, looks up to heaven, says a blessing, breaks the bread, and gives it to his disciples.

We find this wording in our liturgy as well,

On the night that he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take, eat; this is my Body which is given for you: Do this in remembrance of me.”

This is no mistake. In the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus is demonstrating that he is the broken bread. He is the bread of life.

He came to draw us to himself so that he can feed us with the bread of heaven.

With the bread that came down from heaven.

2 — The Bread of Life, The Manna that Came down from Heaven

Jesus is the bread of life. He's the manna that came down from heaven.

John, chapter 6, gives us the record of what happened in the days just after Jesus fed the 5,000.

This helps us to understand the meaning of this miracle.

John tells us the crowd Jesus had miraculously fed the day before followed him.

They were looking for another meal. Frankly, it's hard to blame them. In those times, getting food wasn't as simple as running to Kroger.

The crowd thinks maybe they've found someone who can provide them with food security for life.

They're not exactly wrong, but Jesus wants to feed their souls too.

Look what Jesus said in verses 26 and 27; if you would like to follow along, it's on page 891 in your pew Bible.

He said,

Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.

Jesus knows food is scarce, but he also knows they need a different kind of food; the kind that leads to eternal life.

So being who he is, he tells them where to get the “food that endures to eternal life.”

Let's continue reading, starting in verse 32,

Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

This is the right reaction: “Give us this bread always.”

When offered bread that will satisfy your hunger forever, the correct response is, “Give us this bread always.”

In response to this, Jesus said,

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. ²

After the Children of Israel left Egypt and were wandering in the wilderness, God fed them with bread from heaven, called manna.

The manna that sustained the Children of Israel in the wilderness was given to them by God.

But the real, true bread from Heaven is the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Returning again to John, chapter 6, Jesus said to the crowd,

Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. ³

We need the sustenance that can bring life. Not temporary sustenance but eternal food so that we will never hunger again.

Every day, in an effort to fill our hunger for truth, life, knowledge, and other desires, we consume any number of things that simply can't satisfy us.

Some consume riches in the hope that they will find happiness, contentment, and security. A bigger and better job, a bigger home, just the right balance that's enough but not too much. But will it ever be enough? Often when we achieve what we wanted we find that the goalpost have moved.

When a reporter asked the billionaire, John D. Rockefeller, how much money was enough, he answered: “Just a little bit more”.

Others seek truth and knowledge through news outlets and political drama.

Truth and knowledge are good only when pointed at the true bread. If we feed on things that are not life-giving, we get back death. When we feed on the Bread of Life, we get back life.

The prophet Isaiah asked, “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?” ⁴

Still others use retail therapy to fill a void created by loss and loneliness. Things that can never satisfy. Recently, an Amazon delivery driver was caught on a video doorbell saying, “I’ve been delivering to this house every day for 9 years. Isn’t the house full yet?” More and more and more is a desire that can never fulfill us.

Riches, politics, and things may numb us or satisfy us for the moment, but they’re just other versions of that gas station cheeseburger. These things fill us for the moment, but they don’t last long, and before we know it we’re hungry again.

This is why Jesus calls us to feast on the bread of life. He knows you get out what you put in.

Today, unlike most Sundays, we are able to both read the Gospel AND step into the miracle it tells us about.

3 — The Eucharist

At this altar table Jesus meets us. He takes the gifts of bread and wine which we offer him from the gifts he has already given us.

Our offering is insufficient, but that’s ok because we come to the altar not because we have enough; we come because we don’t have enough.

We bring our offering knowing that when we place the little we have in the hands of Jesus, he will take it up, bless it, break it, and give it back to us as the Bread of Heaven.

He doesn’t send us away empty to find fulfillment anywhere else. He draws us to himself so he can fill us with the bread of life.

Our work is to come as the boy did and place our offering in Jesus hands.

Today as we come to this table, we come to the intersection of the feeding of the 5,000, the Manna that came down from Heaven, and the Lord’s Supper.

This Eucharist isn’t a one-time thing; it’s a for-all-time thing. It’s all one meal, the meal of the Bread of Heaven.

Today, August 2, 2026, God continues to rain down manna from heaven to feed his people. He’s raining down the bread of heaven right now, today, here in Knoxville at Apostles and at other Churches all over the world.

Not in some vague way, but with the body of Christ, the Bread of Heaven. With the blood of Christ, the Cup of Salvation.

Conclusion

In a few minutes the celebrant will consecrate the bread and wine, and we will be invited to feast on the Bread of Life. We'll join the 5,000 on that hillside, and we'll be fed by the One who broke five loaves and two fish and somehow had enough for everyone.

When you come to the altar rail, bring your five loaves and two fish. Bring whatever you have to offer to Christ, even if, especially if, it's insufficient.

Come with the faith of a child, holding out whatever small thing you've got, entrusting it to Christ.

Leave what can never satisfy you at the door.

Stretch out empty hands as a confession that you need to be fed.

And feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Amen.

Scripture References

¹ Matthew 14:19

² John 6:48-51

³ John 6:52-54

⁴ Isaiah 55:2