

25<sup>th</sup> July 2021  
8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity  
Year B

*Collect*

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,  
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern  
both our hearts and bodies  
in the ways of your laws  
and the works of your commandments;  
that through your most mighty protection, both here and ever,  
we may be preserved in body and soul;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

*2 Kings 4.42-44*

A man came from Baal Shalishah, bringing the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread baked from the first ripe corn, along with some ears of new corn. "Give it to the people to eat," Elisha said.

"How can I set this before a hundred men?" his servant asked.

But Elisha answered, "Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the LORD says: 'They will eat and have some left over.'" Then he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD.

*Ephesians 3.14-21*

I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

*John 6.1-21*

Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

## **Reflection by Arthur**

We have just learned that the re-organisation of the churches in the diocese, and more particularly in our own deanery here on the Island has been delayed in order for a feasibility study to be undertaken. It will look into the needs and opportunities within the parishes and how we can move forward in a positive way, organising ourselves into a more efficient and successful organisation. When I first looked at the readings for today I was reminded of my years working for Airbus when there always seemed to be re-organisation of one sort or another. Sometimes several new patterns of working would be introduced over a number of years which didn't even involve me moving my desk! However, eventually I had to move from the second floor to the first floor because I had to change departments. My role had not changed but I had to work with different people and so ended up with a vertical change of position! When we asked what the advantages were in the changes we were told that we should stop looking at our small part of the organisation and look at the overall picture. Like most organisations we had our fair share of 'wags' and very soon many pictures of 'overalls' appeared on all the noticeboards. The truth was we needed to look at the big picture to see what was happening across the company. It was to encourage us to look at the wider implications and not to worry too much about the effect on us personally. Easier said than done!

This morning's passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians is actually a prayer for them. It is in the form of a summary of the first half of the letter and then it looks forward to the second half. The focus is constantly shifting from the big picture (the greatness of God's love) and the life of the believer within the big picture. Paul tells the Ephesians of the glorious riches God our creator and redeemer possesses and will bless us with. He then prays that God will strengthen them with the Spirit as they seek to live out their lives of faith. The love of Christ is so amazing that it is impossible for us to grasp but Paul still prays that the Ephesians will know that love in their lives and be rooted and grounded in it. On the one hand the prayer holds the tremendous scope of God's love in action and on the other his intimate involvement in every detail of our lives.

The second reading for this morning from John tells the story of the feeding of the multitude. This story shows the sheer generosity of God's grace. The unconditional provision and abundance of what he provides is astonishing. The events occur at a highly significant time; the approach of the

Passover and points to his death at Passover time the following year. It is at the cross that the abundant grace of God is supremely demonstrated.

We are told that Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee and a great crowd of people followed him because they had witnessed the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down with his disciples. But the people began to follow and Jesus asks Philip where they can buy enough bread to feed them all. He knew, of course what he was going to do. Here is a lesson about sharing and faith. A boy admits that he has five small barley loaves and two small fish. Is he really going to share these small provisions with the crowd? But Jesus accepts the boy's bread and fish, also given freely but totally inadequate for the task. Jesus uses our weak offerings in remarkable ways despite our struggle to muster faith in return.

We learn from this that our relationship with God is grounded in his unconditional, wonderful, sacrificial love and our response must be trust and loving obedience. Of course, the crowd is overwhelmed and can only think of the provision of their supper! They do not see the bigger picture! Jesus rebukes the people in verses 26 and 27 which follow our reading. He tells them that they are looking for him not because of the miraculous signs, but because they had eaten their fill. These Galileans had completely misunderstood the mission of Jesus. They thought that he was the one who had come to save them from the oppression of the ruling Romans. He was to be the one who would set up a political state to challenge the authorities and bring in cheap food to satisfy their needs. They could not see the bigger picture that Jesus was to take care of their spiritual needs and bring them into a closer relationship with God. Yes, he would heal the sick and perform miracles for the people, but all of this was to encourage the people to repent and move forward in a new direction. Let us pray that we too can put our trust in Jesus Christ, looking forward to a closer relationship with God and always keeping the bigger picture foremost in our minds.

## **Post Communion Prayer**

Strengthen for service, Lord,  
the hands that have taken holy things;  
may the ears which have heard your word  
    be deaf to clamour and dispute;  
may the tongues which have sung your praise  
be free from deceit;  
may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love  
    shine with the light of hope;  
and may the bodies which have been fed with your body  
    be refreshed with the fullness of your life;  
glory to you for ever.

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