

3rd August 2020

Dear Friends,

For many following the lectionary readings yesterday, you will have heard the familiar story of the feeding of the five thousand, the version in St Matthew's gospel.

The disciples were urging Jesus to send the people away to buy food for themselves in the surrounding villages. But Jesus said:

*'They need not go away ; **You give them something to eat**'* Matt 14 : 16

Food, in one way or another, is on our minds much of the time. During the pandemic, we have faced empty shelves, queues for shops and supermarkets and many have volunteered to shop for those who have been unable to leave their homes to buy it for themselves due to shielding measures.

The 'need to feed' is very instinctive!

Last year, Andrew, my husband, and I were at home on afternoon. It was a fine day and we had the front door open.

I was suddenly aware of footsteps on the stairs and a little dog appeared in front of me, fussing round my feet! We searched for an owner but couldn't see anyone. We phoned the number we found on the collar, but no one answered.

What was the first thing after that we thought to do? Find it something to eat! We went to our neighbours who have dogs and got some food and were just about to give it some when the phone rang and it was the owner! She had been visiting the neighbour across the road and not noticed that the dog had strayed!!

And what is the first thing many of us do when human visitors arrive? Offer them a drink and something to eat! I find myself apologising these days for not having any biscuits or cake to present to people as I'm still trying to stick to my healthy eating plan!

We also show concern for the many in our country and our world who do not have enough to eat. We help through giving to food banks and special collections. Food is vital for life.

Then at the opposite end of the scale, we have so many cookery programmes and competitions on TV where an obscene amount of food must be wasted to create, for example, extravagant art works in sugar and 40 identical patisseries to be judged!! That doesn't stop me being totally addicted to them, willing my favourite competitor to win!

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The Methodist Church

One of my favourite programmes is 'MasterChef'. A series has just finished.

The part of the programme I really enjoy is where the competitors are sent to a workplace or big celebration to cook for 150 people. Those taking part also seem to get great satisfaction from feeding the large number of workers or guests their midday meal.

But as human beings, we need the 'right' food to give us good and balanced nutrition don't we? There are lots of reports on the news currently about our country's 'obesity problem'. Many eat things which are simply not good for us in large quantities and we gain weight, making us susceptible to various health conditions, the experts say, including COVID19.

So how are we to interpret Jesus' instruction to the disciples to give the people something to eat for today's context?

Jesus was probably pleased that the disciples cared about the crowd, indicated by their realisation that the people would be hungry. But he challenges them to, if they *really* care, to feed them themselves. They, understandably, question his command.

Does that sound familiar?

When thinking about our individual callings to follow Jesus, haven't we said the same thing? Our small ideas to care get bounced back to us in what appears to be an impossible suggestion and we respond, 'I can't do that', 'I haven't got the skills/ ability/ experience'. 'I'm *just* me.'

What Jesus does with 'what we offer' is amazing! He turns it into something much more than we could ever imagine. He uses whatever we offer in our service of others, be it care and compassion, our time, our gifts, our personalities, anything from within ourselves given through care and concern for humankind.

We can all offer something which can 'nourish' someone else – be it edible or otherwise!

'You give them something to eat'

Take care and stay safe everyone – particularly those of us in the metropolitan area of Bradford facing new guidelines.

May you know the presence of our Lord in all you do and all you offer in his name.

Deacon Liz