

Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Metcalfe
February 28, 2021
Lent 2

Celebrant: The churches of our Diocese stand on the traditional territories of the Algonquin nation.

All: May we dwell on these lands always with respect and peace.

Celebrant Almighty God,
All to you all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from you no secrets are hidden.
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Trisagion (said three times)

Holy God,
holy and mighty,
holy immortal one,
have mercy upon us.

Celebrant: Almighty God, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon a cross, give us faith to perceive his glory, that being strengthened by his grace, we may be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

The Proclamation of the Word

The first Reading is from the second book of Genesis, Chapter 17, Verses 1 to 7, 15 to 16

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 22 (verses 23-30)

For he does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty;
neither does he hide his face from them; but when they cry to him he hears them.

**My praise is of him in the great assembly;
I will perform my vows in the presence of those who worship him.**

The poor shall eat and be satisfied,
and those who seek the Lord shall praise him:
“May your heart live for ever!”

**All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations shall bow before him.**

For kingship belongs to the Lord;
he rules over the nations.

**To him alone all who sleep in the earth bow down in worship;
all who go down to the dust fall before him.**

My soul shall live for him;
my descendants shall serve him;
they shall be known as the Lord’s for ever.

**They shall come and make known to a people yet unborn the saving deeds that
he has done.**

The second Reading is from Paul to the Romans, Chapter 4, Verses 13 to 25

It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Gospel

Reader The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Reader The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ *according to the Blessed St. John. Chapter 6, Verses 1 to 15*

People **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Some time after this, 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 signs he had performed by healing the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward 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, "It would take more than half a year's wages^[a] to 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, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). 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." ¹³ 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 sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." ¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

The Gospel of Christ.

People **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

The Homily – Loaves and Fishes

On the peaceful shores of the Sea of Galilee there is a small church at the village of Tagtha with a magnificent view of the blue lake, the rolling hills of Jordan and the fertile lands of the Galilee. The first church was built there in the fourth century and has been called The Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes ever since. Twice destroyed, the church was rediscovered in the nineteenth century and among the treasure uncovered was a beautifully preserved mosaic floor depicting two fish and a basket of bread. Tradition says that this is the place where Jesus fed the multitudes and the mosaic is one of the most popular (if not THE most popular) iconic take-homes for all travellers to the Holy Lands.

The story of Jesus and the young boy who gave bread and fish is one of the most beloved narratives in all the scriptures and appears in all four gospels. Because of this alone, it is believed that something happened at Tagtha that all the evangelists felt compelled to record and remember. One of the interesting sidenotes is that while the stories are very similar, each of the evangelists gives a different number for the

headcount that afternoon. It is an example of what I spoke about last week as the Synoptic problem – storyline the same, details different!

So, what happens and why should we care? As a part of this series about living as Kingdom folk, I suggest that there are a number of things that rise from the depth of the story which inform us on how to live in the peaceable kingdom which Jesus revealed so long ago. Here's the story:

Jesus has attracted a large crowd to a natural amphitheatre in the hills that roll down to the Galilee. As the afternoon wears on, more and more people arrive and soon, the sun begins to set behind the horizon. No one seems willing to leave because even when they suggest that everyone go home, no one moves. The disciples go to Jesus and ask him what they should do as it is going on evening and everyone is hungry. Jesus answers, "Give them something to eat."

The disciples are flabbergasted – feed all those folk? The nearest town is a distance away and besides, it would drain all their finances to buy enough food for everyone. This is not their fault, they claim – surely, they are not responsible for feeding the crowd? As they try to figure out what to do, a young boy approaches Jesus and says, "It's not much, but here...", opens a small bag attached to his belt and hands Jesus a small loaf of bread and a few fish, all that he has. Jesus looks at the lad, takes the fish and bread, blesses them and the boy and calls his followers to him. "Take this", he says, "and share it among all who are here." Miraculously, when all is said and done, there is much left over and everyone is amazed at what has happened before their very eyes. Having fed them Jesus dismisses the crowd who return to their homes with questions like "What just happened?", "did I dream this?", "who is this Jesus after all?"

The story can be explored from a number of angles. For most people, it is a saga of the miraculous powers Jesus showed to let people see and know who he was – the Promised One who had power over all dominions and authorities, as spoken of in the ancient prophets. Jesus WAS absolutely capable of doing such a thing and indeed was known as a miracle worker in his own time. It is, for them, a sign of the caring and compassionate nature of God who, seeing the situation His children are in, responds like he did with the Hebrew children in the Sinai when he sent manna to feed the starving tribes as they escaped Egypt under the guidance of Moses, Aaron and Miriam.

For others, it is a story of Jesus and his response to a generous act of sacrifice on the part of the young boy. Because of how children were viewed in that ancient time, as a burden on society, it is fitting and jarring that the miracle should be initiated with the offer of fish and bread from one deemed so worthless. The young man offered Jesus his ALL, holding nothing back. Jesus accepts the gift and uses it to respond to a basic human need – to be fed and through that act, be loved.

But, what if?..... I know that usually signals that I'm off in my imagination again and YES I AM! What if.... What if there was a miracle that happened that afternoon but it wasn't the one recorded by the evangelists? What if there was a far more powerful miracle acted out as the sun nestled down into the crook of the hills and readied herself for sleep? What if the miracle was this:

The crowd was large, larger than any gathering Jesus had attracted in his life. The numbers far outdid the expectations. As Jesus sat on the side of the hill and looked out at the swelling sea of faces, he saw men, women and children of all ages and colours. Some were in their sabbath finery while most wore the plain rough cloth of the working class or the poor. Some looked like they had just come from the salon; others like they hadn't seen soap for years. Regardless of how the world would have classified each of those who sat and gazed up the slope at the young man, all Jesus saw was a

community of people who were longing to hear a call to hope, a word that indicated they mattered and that someone cared that they were alive. Jesus brought with him a simple yet profound message – that the Creator loved everything he had made...EVERYTHING including the least of them. He told them that, in the eyes and heart of God, each one of them was as valuable as the largest and rarest pearl, more precious than all the salt in the Dead Sea which lay just miles from where they sat. For many, this would have been the first time they would have felt affirmed and shown even a modicum of respect and honour. Something was happening to and in the crowd as the afternoon wore on and Jesus could see it before him – people who had sat in their small community or family groups were shifting ever closer to one another as the words of love and care poured from the heart of the shepherd into the hearts of all these strangers. People who in normal circumstance and in the thrust of everyday would have defined each other based on appearance and address were shifting ever so slightly and soon found themselves within touching distance of persons they would have ignored or scorned in the streets of their villages and towns. Something was drawing them together into a common humanity, into a fellowship where all that mattered was the shared rhythm of their hearts beating as one. And then...it happened. Those closest to Jesus and his followers were the first to see it and soon the word was passed from person to person down the valley. A young boy it appeared had sensed that there was something wrong when the disciples of Jesus circled their master and engaged in a rather animated conversation. He couldn't hear everything that was said, but picked up the drift- "late...hungry crowd...too many...cost too much..." Maybe he heard one of them say "We'd need a miracle to feed all these folk"; maybe he didn't but he found himself rising, approaching Jesus, opening his satchel and handing the man everything from within – a small loaf and a few dried fish. Word of what he had done spread like the white spores of milkweed in the wind. The crowd began to react to what the boy had done by...reaching into their own bags and baskets, laying all that they had on the grass before them and inviting those nearest to them to help themselves – strangers feeding strangers, strangers becoming friends in the breaking of bread. More than the sharing of food happened there near the village of Tagtha that afternoon – a revolution had broken out, not with swords and spears and rocks, but with shreds of fish and crumbs of bread shared...

This tale speaks to me of several things related to my desire to be a Kingdom – liver. Can I see beyond the social and cultural norms in which I dwell to recognize the value and integrity of the strangers that pass by me, especially those who do not look like me or act like me or speak like me or...? Am I generous beyond expectation with my resources, my gifts and talents in my desire that all persons should share the wealth and opportunity with which I have been blessed? Can I see beyond all the stereotypes of gender, colour, social ranking and economic worth to embrace each person I encounter as a fellow pilgrim, regardless of the journey each is on, especially if it isn't the path I have chosen?

There is no doubt that miracles happened at Tagtha. The how of it is really secondary to the what of it – that God provided not only food for the body that afternoon, but fed souls that were starving for love and opened hearts that were closed against hurt... miracles do happen -- for with God all things are possible.

The Apostles' Creed

Celebrant Let us confess the faith of our baptism, as we say,

**All I believe in God,
the Father almighty,**

creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

**He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again
to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

The Prayers of the People

In peace, we pray to you, Lord God.

For all people in their daily life and work;

For our families, friends, and neighbours, and for all those who are alone.

For this community, our country, and the world;

For all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

For the just and proper use of your creation;

For the victims of hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression.

For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;

For those who minister to the sick, the friendless, and the needy.

For the peace and unity of the Church of God;

For all who proclaim the gospel, and all who seek the truth.

For Shane our bishop, and for all bishops and other ministers;

For all who serve God in his Church.

For our own needs and those of others.

Hear us, Lord;

For your mercy is great.

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We will exalt you, O God our king;

And praise your name for ever and ever.

We pray for all those who have died in the peace of Christ, and for those whose faith is known to you alone, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom.

Lord, let your loving kindness be upon them;

Who put their trust in you.

We pray to you also for the forgiveness of our sins.

Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father;

in your compassion, forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone; and so uphold us by your Spirit that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honour and glory of your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gracious God, you have heard the prayers of your faithful people; you know our needs before we ask, and our ignorance in asking. Grant our requests as may be best for us.

This we ask in the name of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

We ask you to watch over all our parish family, remembering especially Zachariah, Marjorie, Cheryl, Jeanette, Roy, Emerson, and those known to You alone. May we, by example, draw others towards the glorious Light of the World.

In the Worldwide Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de America.

In our Diocesan Cycle, we pray for the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer and Paul Dumbille, Ottawa Representative, and for all parish representatives.

We pray for all Parish Administrators in our diocese.

We pray for Martin Luther Lutheran Church, and their pastor, Friedrich Demke.

Confession and Absolution

Celebrant: Dear friends in Christ, God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy; he welcomes sinners and invites us to his table.

Let us confess our sins, confident in God's forgiveness.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry

and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us, that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

Celebrant: Almighty God have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from all our sins, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

The Peace

Leader: The peace of our Lord be always with you.

All: **And also with you.**

Additional Prayers

Celebrant: Draw your church together O Lord, into one great company of disciples, together following our Lord Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving him in his mission to the world, and together witnessing to his love on every continent and island. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen

All: **Lord God Almighty, Shaper and Ruler, we pray for your great mercy, that you may guide us towards you, for at times we cannot find our way. Guide us to your will, to the needs of our souls, for we cannot do this ourselves. Make our minds steadfast in your will and aware of our soul's needs. Strengthen us against all temptations and remove from us all that separate us from you. Teach us to do your will, that we may inwardly love you with pure minds. For you are our Maker and our Redeemer, our Helper, our Comforter and our Hope. To you be glory and praise now and always.**

Amen

Celebrant: God of hope and love, as our world seems more and more chaotic, help us to open our hearts and our minds to your generosity of peace. Sometimes, Lord Jesus, when we are alone, bombarded by news and statistics, we may feel lonely, scared, apprehensive and afraid that nothing will ever be the same again. In those moments, be with us so we feel your love surrounding us and help us to remember that you will never leave us. Give us strength to reach out to other people to share our feelings and fears and to listen intently to theirs so that together we may find calm in knowing that we are your people and you gift us with all that we need, moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day. In all things and no matter how we feel, give us knowledge and wisdom to always give thanks to you that the gift of gratitude may help us to return to you and overcome the fear that threatens us. Bless us God, who is Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit. Amen

Dismissal and Blessing

Celebrant: May we know the love of the Father deep within our hearts; may we feel the bonds that bind us together as sisters and brothers in Jesus; may we remember the lengths he was willing to go and the sacrifice He made for all humankind; may we freely respond today to His call to cherish all His creation. And that peace of God which passes all our understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God. And the blessing of God, Father Son and Spirit, be with us all now and forever. Amen.

Now go into the world filled with the power of the Spirit.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

