

Bearsden

Pentecost 10/Trinity 9, 2/8/26

Readings: Isaiah 55: 1-5; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14: 13-21

May I speak in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Most of us know what it feels like to look at a situation and think, “I don’t have enough.” Not enough time, not enough energy, not enough money, not enough faith. In today’s gospel the disciples felt exactly that. Five loaves, two fish, thousands of people. Yet Jesus shows that God’s abundance often begins where our resources run out.

In fact all three of today’s readings proclaim a God who meets human hunger—spiritual, emotional, physical—with abundance that is not earned but freely given. They invite us to trust that God’s generosity is greater than our scarcity, our grief, and even our failures.

Isaiah opens with an astonishing invitation: “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters... come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

This is a summons to people who have nothing—exiles, the spiritually exhausted, those who feel they have run out of resources. Isaiah names the truth we often hide: beneath our routines and responsibilities lies a deep thirst. Not just for water, but for meaning, belonging, forgiveness, hope.

And God’s response is even more astonishing as it is not about rationing but feasting. Not “prove yourself worthy,” but “come as you are.” Not “pay what you owe,” but “without money and without price.”

This is the heartbeat of the Gospel: God’s generosity precedes our deserving.

Romans 9 shifts the tone. Paul writes with anguish for his own people, Israel—those who received the covenants, the promises, the law, the worship, the patriarchs. He is wrestling with heartbreak: why do some reject the Messiah? Why does God’s generosity not seem to be received? Paul’s sorrow is important. It reminds us that faith is not neat. Love is not tidy. Ministry is not painless.

But Paul also insists on something crucial: God's faithfulness does not fail. The story of Israel is not discarded; it is the very soil from which Christ comes. God's generosity is not limited by human resistance. Even when people turn away, God continues to pursue, to call, to invite.

Isaiah's feast is still set. The doors are still open.

Then we come to Matthew 14 where we hear one of the most familiar stories about Jesus ever. Jesus has just heard of John the Baptist's death. He withdraws to a deserted place—grieving, seeking solitude. This is not a casual retreat. It is grief. It is shock. It is the moment when the cost of his mission becomes painfully clear.

But the crowds follow him. They are hungry for healing, hungry for hope, hungry for him. Jesus seeks solitude, but the crowds follow him. They bring their sickness, their desperation, their hunger. And instead of turning them away, Matthew says: "He had compassion for them." Even in his own sorrow, Jesus' heart is moved. This is the first miracle in the story: compassion in the midst of pain.

As evening falls the disciples take a practical view. "This is a deserted place... send the crowds away." They are not being unkind; they are being sensible. They see the limits: limited food, limited time, limited energy and limited responsibility ("this is not our problem"). Their world is shaped by scarcity. And scarcity always leads to dismissal: *send them away*.

But Jesus replies with a sentence that changes everything: "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." It is a command that sounds impossible. It is also the moment when discipleship becomes real.

The disciples see scarcity and reply honestly: "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish."

But Jesus sees possibility: "Bring them here to me." Jesus asks for what they have, not what they lack. They have nothing—except a little. Nothing—except what they are willing to offer.

Jesus does not scold them for having too little. He does not ask them to produce more. He simply says: "Bring them here to me." This is the turning point of the miracle.

God's abundance begins with human willingness. Grace begins with offering what seems insignificant. The Kingdom begins with five loaves and two fish.

And the miracle is not simply that thousands are fed. It is that Jesus transforms the disciples' meagre offering into overflowing abundance. Scarcity becomes generosity. Fear becomes trust. Hunger becomes satisfaction. Everyone eats. Everyone is satisfied. And there are twelve baskets left over—one for each disciple, as if Jesus is saying: "You gave what little you had. Now see what I can give you." The leftovers are not waste; they are teaching. They are evidence that God's generosity exceeds human imagination.

Jesus' miracle does not begin with power but with empathy. Our own ministries—formal or informal—begin the same way. God works with what we have, not what we wish we had. Five loaves and two fish are enough when placed in Christ's hands. So are our limited time, limited courage, limited resources.

The disciples assume there is not enough. Jesus reveals that God's economy is different. Jesus gives the bread to the disciples, and *they* give it to the crowd. God's abundance flows through human hands.

And note, the wilderness is not a barrier to grace. The setting is a deserted place—no shops, no resources, no plan. Yet it becomes the site of overwhelming generosity.

Across these texts today runs a single thread: God meets human hunger with divine abundance.

- Isaiah: Come, without money and without price.
- Paul: God's promises do not fail.
- Jesus: You give me your little; I will give you more than enough.

This is not optimism. It is theology. It is the character of God.

God invites us to bring our emptiness. Our thirst, our grief, our doubts, our small offerings—these are not obstacles. They are the very things God uses.

God's generosity is not earned. We live in a world obsessed with merit, achievement, and proving ourselves. Isaiah's feast cuts through all of that. Grace is not a reward; it is a gift.

God asks us to participate. Jesus could have created bread from stones. Instead, he asks the disciples to bring what they have. God's abundance often begins with our willingness to offer something small.

God's abundance is for sharing. The miracle ends with baskets of leftovers. God's generosity is never meant to be hoarded. It is meant to spill over into the lives of others—especially the hungry, the lonely, the grieving, the forgotten.

Isaiah calls us to the feast. Paul reminds us of God's unfailing faithfulness. Jesus shows us what divine compassion looks like in action. Together they proclaim this truth: Where we see scarcity, God sees abundance. Where we see limits, God sees possibility. Where we see hunger, God prepares a feast.

May we come to that feast with open hands. May we offer our small loaves and fishes. And may we trust that Christ will make them enough—more than enough—for the world he loves.

Our grief. Our small offerings. Our limited faith. Our imperfect compassion. Placed in Christ's hands, they become abundance.