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## *The Feeding of The Five Thousand*

**A sermon by the Very Reverend Sam Candler**

**Atlanta, Georgia**

**The Fourth Sunday of Lent**

**John 6:4-15: The Feeding of the Five Thousand**

The feeding of the five thousand. It was two thousand years ago, and it is this morning.

I don't think I have enough this morning. I didn't sleep well, and I woke up tired. I've been waking up tired for weeks now. The news always brings a new threat. The children are arguing. There is war. There is worry.

I don't think I have enough.

Then I joined this throng of people. We were going out to hear a teacher, a prophet some said. Some said he was the messiah. Still others were calling him the next king, the next king of Israel.

His name was Jesus, and maybe we would hear him today. Maybe we would go hear him instead of doing the regular chores today. Instead of reading the newspaper. Instead of lying around the lake, the Sea of Galilee. Maybe we should take in this latest entertainment, this king of Israel, this new rabbi, this prophet.

Well, I'll go. I'll even take the children. They say they have childcare, but one never knows these days. Some of my friends are there, and they take their children.

Now that I'm here, it turns out that the children like the place. There are some truly caring people here, too.

When I hear this Jesus, I don't agree with every thing he says. I know that some of my friends don't agree with him either. What is this stuff about turning the other cheek? That goes against our very tradition. Didn't our synagogue say, "An eye for an eye; tooth for a tooth?" That's the way I was taught. Why do all these young teachers insist on re-interpreting everything?

Still, it is the way he teaches. It is his presence. He speaks with authority, and not merely like one of the preachers, like one of the scholars. This Jesus is real. In fact, my children say he's cool.

Well, I do not know what all this can do to help me. I don't think I have enough to make it. I am stressed these days. There is war. Some of our troops are headed for Baghdad even now. One of my friend's cousins is over there. They are calling up the national guard.

I just don't feel right these days. I've lost my peace. In fact, I wonder if I even ever had peace. I have too much to worry about. My children are wonderful, but I worry for them. Will they make the team? Will they learn how to study? Will they be healthy?

Then there's the neighborhood. My taxes went way up last year. How did our city ever get into this mess?

My pension plan nosedived last year. This economy looks bad. I had to get a new job several years ago; and I think I've done well, but who knows? It seems like the whole thing could cave tomorrow.

And now, now, the local synagogue wants to conduct a building campaign, too. Don't they know how stressed out we are already? They say we simply need more room. They say we need to make a witness for God in this place. I guess that's a good thing, but it does add one more burden to my anxiety.

Well, this Jesus seems to know all this, but he somehow speaks through it. He sees us all here, the poor, the sad, the meek, those who really want righteousness, those who really want to see peace. He seems to know who we really are, deep down. And he looks at us now, and he says, "Blessed are you." "Blessed are you." Can you imagine that?

Actually, that's what I need today. I need someone who will look at me with piercing truth. I need someone who knows just how bad things really are in my life, and who then says, "Blessed are you."

You know, I'm starting to get hungry. I don't think anyone planned ahead. What kind of operation is this, anyway, that doesn't even plan a meal for all these people?

Look at all those apostles and disciples. They are so dis-organized. They're asking one another whose job it was to buy food for all these people. That's your role. No, it was your job. Who has enough money to buy food for all these people, anyway. Those disciple-types are just as lost as I am. They're just as hungry as I am. They don't have enough either. They're looking for something, too.

Now, here's something. There's a small boy here. He actually looks happy. He looks full. He's got several loaves of bread, and he seems to have, what, some fish? What was he planning to do with all that food?

The disciple-types have taken the bread and fish to Jesus. I want to get a little closer. What is Jesus doing? Jesus is praying. He's praying, but he's not praying for more food. His prayers -- they are not asking for anything else. He's just being thankful, that's all. They are prayers of thanksgiving.

What is he giving thanks for? Is he giving thanks that all of us, except for one, forgot to bring any food? Is he giving thanks that we are so dis-organized? Well, he did ask us to be orderly, to sit down, to relax.

He is actually giving thanks for the food. It seems like such a little bit! What are five loaves of bread and two fish among so many? What are these meager prayers in the face of such anxiety and worry? We are desperate this morning! We are at war, the economy is stuck, our children are worried, my husband and I are unhappy. We're hungry! We need help!

Why in the world is Jesus giving thanks? What is there to give thanks for?

"Give us this day our daily bread. Do not worry about what you will eat, or what you will wear. Do not worry about tomorrow. Seek first the kingdom of God."

Those are the prayers Jesus is offering. He is giving thanks for this day. He is giving thanks for every small blessing that has come our way.

You know, he's right. I have some beautiful things to be thankful for. Maybe they are small, but somehow when I give thanks for them, those small things become enormous. They become incredibly gratifying! I give thanks for one small characteristic of my wife, and suddenly her whole being is beautiful again! I give thanks for one smile from my child, and suddenly his whole life is hopeful again. I give thanks for one piece of wisdom from my parents, and suddenly their entire lives are worth it.

I give thanks for one ray of sun entering my window, and suddenly my house is whole again. I give thanks for one paycheck, and suddenly it is enough.

I give thanks for my synagogue, my church, and suddenly I realize what a source of blessing it has been to me, what a source of blessing it is to my city, my world. I give thanks for the folks who work for the city, and suddenly the city works again. I give thanks for our leaders, and I begin to appreciate even the ones I disagree with.

There is something going on here. I think it's a miracle. It looks like a fool up there on the hill, giving thanks for five small loaves of bread and two fish. What meager rations for so much need in the world!

But Jesus has blessed that food. And it became enough. He has given thanks for that food. And now I have, too.

I give thanks today. I give thanks for whatever I can. I want to find a small child, too, and give thanks. I want to find some small piece of food, and give thanks for it! I can do that! I can give thanks! And when I give thanks, I do have enough. That is a miracle.

That thanksgiving is going to feed me. That thanksgiving is going to feed me, after all. In fact, it's going to feed, not just me, but it's going to feed the five thousand around me. When I give thanks, like Jesus, I feed those around me. When five thousand around me give thanks, too, when five thousand around me give thanks, we will feed the entire city, we will feed the whole world.

AMEN.

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