

A Priest Rabbi and Minister fishing in the lake. Minister says he has to go to the toilet - steps off the side and walks across the water to land, goes and walks back the same way. A bit later the Rabbi says he has to go and walks across the water, goes and comes back feet dry. The Priest has to go but questions if he can walk on water also but figures if other members of faith can do it so can he. He steps off the boat and immediately goes in over his head. The other two pull him back into the boat. The priest says " how can you two walk on water ? I am as holy as you are. The Rabbi turns to the minister and says - should we tell him where the sandbar is?

As Jesus crosses the Sea of Tiberias, large crowds follow him along the shore. This lake was more commonly known as the Sea of Galilee. Its Roman name came from the new town of Tiberias, named after the emperor

The crowd's motive in pursuing Jesus was because of the "signs that he was doing for the sick." The implication is that they were not following Jesus for his own sake or because of his teaching. They were not really disciples but, to some extent, people looking for something just for themselves. It is possible for us to come to Jesus in that frame of mind too, our prayers full of 'Give me this and give me that', but with little real commitment to the mission of the Kingdom.

Jesus goes up the mountain and sits down with his disciples. There are echoes here of Moses on Mt Sinai; Jesus is the new Moses and his disciples are the nucleus of God's new people. It is also close to Passover, a time soon to be linked with the new Passover in the death and resurrection of Jesus and with the Eucharist, which is the new Passover meal. The whole of the chapter is linked to this.

Seeing the vast crowds approaching, Jesus teasingly asks Philip, always presented as being somewhat simple and naive:

Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?

As Philip came from Bethsaida, which was nearby, it was logical to ask him as a 'local boy'. If Philip had any insight into who Jesus really was, he might have given a different answer. As it was he sees no solution:

Six months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.

Then Andrew, Peter's brother and sometimes seen as a companion of Philip, mentions a small boy who has five barley loaves and a couple of dried fish.

Barley bread was the food of the poor. Obviously, that would not go very far. But of course, it is all that Jesus needs.

The British priest and author, Monsignor Ronald Knox, makes much of this small boy who was picked out of the crowd and was being asked to give up his precious lunch. The boy played a crucial role; it was his tiny contribution which made it possible for the whole crowd to be filled and satisfied.

It is typical of Jesus to make use of someone, a very insignificant person, in the doing of his work. This is something which happens all the time. How many times have we been chosen to be an instrument of God's work? How many times have we failed to recognise some person we regarded as being of no importance who was in fact bringing us something from God? How often have we not recognised God's presence in what needed to be done?

Jesus now gets all the people to sit down on the grass:

Then, in a ritual reminiscent of the Eucharist, Jesus:

...took the loaves, and when he had given thanks he distributed them to those who were seated.

All had enough and more than enough to satisfy their hunger, and the disciples are instructed to gather up all that is left over. After doing so, 12 baskets were filled. The Jews regarded bread as a gift of God and it was required that any scraps that fell to the ground should be picked up. These were collected in small wicker baskets which were carried as part of one's daily attire. Twelve represents a number of completeness and abundance – an indication of just how much there was from the original five loaves that the little boy offered.

The boy provided the offering, but the Lord gave the increase. Such is always the case. The 12 baskets may also represent the Twelve, the ones who actually did the distributing of the Lord's bountifulness– still the role of the Church today.

The crowd became excited at the sign they had witnessed and was saying:

This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.

Recall that John the Baptist was also asked if he was the 'prophet'

As we will see in the rest of the chapter, the sign was pointing to Jesus and the food for eternal life which he will give. But the people were thinking of the 'Prophet' mentioned in Deuteronomy (18:15) who would be like Moses. Through Moses, God had provided food, manna and water, from the rock for

the people in the desert. The Prophet they were expecting would do more or less the same.

Jesus, realising that they wanted to make him their leader, fled to the mountains alone. This is an example of one of those temptations experienced by Jesus when fasting in the desert:

...the devil...showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."
(Matt 4:8-9)

Jesus had come to win over the people to himself as Messiah and Lord and here was a glorious opportunity when the people were, literally, eating out of his hand.

But Jesus knew that this was not the way he was to become king, nor was he to be the kind of king that these people wanted him to be...so he fled. The time for establishing his own kind of kingship would come later on.

We, too, sometimes can be tempted to take steps which seem, at first sight, to bring people to Christ but, on reflection, they may be short-sighted and lead to results which are far from the Gospel vision. They tend to lead people to ourselves rather than to God.

We need to learn that with Jesus, there is always enough. Without Jesus, there is never enough.

As the Psalmist said in today's Psalm, Fools have said in their hearts 'There is no God':

With Jesus, five loaves of bread and two fish is more than enough to feed five thousand. And, in fact, just to emphasise his point, Jesus made sure that there was actually more than enough. Twelve baskets of leftovers.

We clearly worship a God of abundance, not scarcity. This is the miracle of the gospel. This is the joy at the heart of our faith.

To keep proclaiming, in many and various ways, that with Jesus there is always enough. Enough love. Enough hope. Enough grace. Enough faith. And enough time, talent, and treasure, too. Enough of all that matters, and all that our world hungers for.

So come to Jesus, wherever you are today, and be fed with the living bread from heaven, which alone can feed your hungry souls.

And then go, in the name of Jesus, to feed the hungry of our world with the bread of life. Share what you have – your faith, hope, and love, and your time, talent, and treasure. And never doubt that with Jesus, what we have, and what we give, will always be more than enough. Thanks be to God. Amen