

NINTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST
July 25, 2021

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RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:

One: We join together as hungry eaters
to be nourished by the food that you offer us.

Many: God of sustenance, give us this day our daily bread.

As you care for the wheat fields that turn into bread
and the vineyards that labor to produce sweet wine,
tend to our bodies by feeding us what we need for
healthy growth.

God of abundance, give us this day our daily bread.

The rich crops that you have prepared are now ready
to be harvested by our hands and our hearts.

Holy Spirit, come! Give us this day our daily bread.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION:

Holy Chef, may we savor the dishes that you have
prepared for us this day. With each bite of your holy
feast, enliven our senses so that we may delight
in the new and tantalizing flavors you have.

Let us give God our thanksgiving and praise.

GLORIA PATRI:

**Glory to the Creator, the Christ, the Holy Spirit,
Three-in-One; As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end, Amen. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 3:14-21

(A prayer and blessing from Paul)

¹⁴This is why I kneel before the Father. ¹⁵Every ethnic
group in heaven or on earth is recognized by him. ¹⁶I ask
that he will strengthen you in your inner selves from the
riches of his glory through the Spirit. ¹⁷I ask that Christ
will live in your hearts through faith. As a result of having
strong roots in love, ¹⁸I ask that you'll have the power to
grasp love's width and length, height and depth, together
with all believers. ¹⁹I ask that you'll know the love of
Christ that is beyond knowledge so that you will be filled
entirely with the fullness of God.

²⁰ Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us; ²¹ glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations, forever and always. Amen.”

***GOSPEL: John 6:1-21**

“Some time after this, Jesus went across the Galilee Sea (that is, the Tiberias Sea). ² A large crowd followed him, because they had seen the miraculous signs he had done among the sick. ³ Jesus went up a mountain and sat there with his disciples. ⁴ It was nearly time for Passover, the Jewish festival.

⁵ Jesus looked up and saw the large crowd coming toward him. He asked Philip, “Where will we buy food to feed these people?” ⁶ Jesus said this to test him, for he already knew what he was going to do.

⁷ Philip replied, “More than a half year’s salary worth of food wouldn’t be enough for each person to have even a little bit.”

⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said, ⁹ “A youth here has five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that for a crowd like this?”

¹⁰ Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass there. They sat down, about five thousand of them. ¹¹ Then Jesus took the bread. When he had given thanks, he distributed it to those who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish, each getting as much as they wanted. ¹² When they had plenty to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather up the leftover pieces, so that

nothing will be wasted.” ¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves that had been left over by those who had eaten.

¹⁴ When the people saw that he had done a miraculous sign, they said, “This is truly the prophet who is coming into the world.” ¹⁵ Jesus understood that they were about to come and force him to be their king, so he took refuge again, alone on a mountain.

¹⁶ When evening came, Jesus’ disciples went down to the lake. ¹⁷ They got into a boat and were crossing the lake to Capernaum. It was already getting dark and Jesus hadn’t come to them yet. ¹⁸ The water was getting rough because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹ When the wind had driven them out for about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the water. He was approaching the boat and they were afraid. ²⁰ He said to them, “I Am. Don’t be afraid.” ²¹ Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and just then the boat reached the land where they had been heading.”

These are sacred Words
God wants to reveal to us today.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: “Where was the miracle?” (With thoughts from Rev. William Barclay)

If we ever complain about how hard we work and how tired we are, think about Jesus. Last week we read they Jesus and his disciples didn’t even have time to eat, much less, take a nap. Everyone wanted a piece of him, the

miracle worker, the healer, the wise and compassionate man. There were times when Jesus desired to withdraw from the crowds. He was under continuous strain and needed rest. Moreover, it was necessary that sometimes he should get his disciples alone to lead them into a deeper understanding of himself. In addition, he needed time for prayer. On this particular occasion, it was wise to go away before a head-on collision with the authorities took place, for the time of the final conflict had not yet come. From Capernaum to the other side of the Sea of Galilee was a distance of about four miles by boat, and Jesus set sail. The people had been watching with astonishment the things he did; it was easy to see the direction the boat was taking; and they hastened around the top of the lake on foot. It was a nine-mile trip by land.

When Jesus' boat arrived at a place called Bethsaida Julias, he and the disciples went up the hill behind the plain of grass to sit and rest. Then the crowd began to appear in droves. I think I would be very frightened if I saw a crowd of a thousand or more coming at me to touch my clothes or cry out for help. And just when I thought I had escaped! I'd be shaking in my boots!

One reason for the large crowds might have been because the Passover Feast was soon and many pilgrims were on their way to Jerusalem walking through the same hill where Jesus was.

Instead of being afraid and overwhelmed by the very large crowd, Jesus' sympathy was kindled. They were

hungry and tired, and they must be fed and the scripture tells us what happened.

We will never know exactly what happened on the grassy plain. We could look at it in three ways. First we may regard it simply as a miracle in which Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes. Some may find that hard to conceive of and some may find it hard to reconcile with the fact that this is what Jesus refused to do at his temptations. (Matthew 4:3-4). If we can believe in the sheer miraculous character of this miracle, then let us continue to do so. But if we are puzzled, there are two other explanations.

It may be that this was really a sacramental meal. In the rest of the chapter, the language of Jesus is exactly that of the Last Supper, when he speaks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. It could be that at this meal it was but a morsel, like the sacrament, that each person received, and that the thrill and wonder of the presence of Jesus and the reality of God turned the sacramental crumb into something which richly nourished their hearts and souls – as happens at every communion service to this day.

There may be another explanation. It is scarcely to be thought that the crowd left on a nine-mile expedition without making any preparations at all. If there were pilgrims with them, they would certainly possess supplies for the way. But it may be that they would not produce what they had, for they selfishly – and very humanly – wished to keep it all for themselves. It may be that Jesus,

with that rare smile of his, produced the little store that the boy shared and with sunny faith Jesus thanked God for it and shared it out. Moved by his example, everyone who had anything did the same, and in the end there was enough and more than enough, for all.

I wonder if THIS might have been the true miracle of the story – PEOPLE SHARED. God calls us to help others and, in this way, we all have abundance. Yet, some people hold back for fear of a famine or a Wall Street crash. When you shop for groceries do you put a little extra in your basket to donate to the food pantry or for Kindercottage, or for a neighbor that's going through a rough patch? Do you set aside some cash to help a charity that could really use it? By sharing with those who need it, your gift is multiplied. The hungry are given nourishment so they can help others. The children at Kindercottage can grow strong and healthy so they can make a difference in the world. Your neighbor is able to turn on the air conditioning to keep cool this summer. I'm sure you can think of more ways small gifts can multiply the good that they do.

You could be the miracle that many are praying for. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER: *Beginning with a time for silent personal prayer.*

Limitless God, Self-limited Christ, Unlimited Spirit, your love seeks to redeem all who will respond to your invitation and to incorporate them in the body of Christ,

the church. The people are the visible agency for the accomplishment of your loving purposes in the world. Enliven your people that they may not be weary in doing good. May they be faithful in answer to your call to duty.

Redeemer of the lost and the wasted, motivate the drifter and the purposeless in a search for their place in your design for humanity that they may find meaning in their existence and real direction for living.

Divine Healer, lead medical researchers in their search for cures to our ailments and enable all medical practitioners to use the best available remedies to heal our infirmities, especially at this time that Covid variants are attacking us again. Be with those who are caring for the sick. Give them strength, perseverance, and compassion as they remain at the bedside of those affected. Hear our prayers for all who need your healing and help; all those on our prayer list and all those whom we name in our hearts before you.

We pray all these things in the name of the One who taught us to pray . . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed it be your name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as, we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

CALL FOR THE OFFERING:

Jesus said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” As we have been granted great abundance, let us offer up those blessings in God’s name.

DOXOLOGY:

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
God for all that love has done.
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen.**

PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

God of wonders, who enabled Jesus and Elisha to feed the multitudes, bless these gifts and use them to fill empty stomachs and empty hearts.
May our offerings be multiplied to abundantly nourish all the people.

BENEDICTION:

God’s love is overwhelming! As we have been fed this day, let us go and offer food and drink to others.
Grant us holy instincts of faith as we trust in you, O God, to place the final touches on our culinary masterpieces. **Amen.**

PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, Nelson Libell, Joe Knapp, Jim Garrett, Agnes Doctolero, Julie Walker, David Seneczyn, Cathy Ganschinetz, Warren Neff, Baby Hannah Mosco, Jack Harris, Wayne Huff.



A child shall lead us