



# 50A PENTECOST 9A BIBLE STUDY

The hour is late

## Abstract

As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

“We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

“Bring them here to me,” he said.

Matthew 14:15–18

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## 50A Pentecost 9A Bible Study

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SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2020 | AFTER PENTECOST | PROPER 13 | YEAR A

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Genesis 32:22–31

Psalm Psalm 17:1–7, 15

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Isaiah 55:1–5

Psalm Psalm 145:8–9, 14–21

New Testament Romans 9:1–5

Gospel Matthew 14:13–21

### Matthew 14.13-21

In a dramatically political atmosphere, Jesus organises a meal for a multitude in the wilderness as a sign of compassion, and a lesson to the disciples that they need to look around them, see the need and meet it.

**This week's resources explore:** bringing people together; the need to share while there is still time.

## Welcome and opening prayer

### A gathering prayer

*Let us pray*

Mighty God of miracles, we come before you.

We imagine what it might have been like  
being part of a crowd of 5,000.

There may be far fewer of us here today,  
but we think about the people in other churches in our town,  
village, country, and on the internet also worshipping you.

Bound together by your great love,  
we gather in spirit to meet with you, Jesus.

Amen.

### Introduction

There is a story about a missionary team in Africa. As they were about to go down the Congo river on their boat, a native chieftain called to them: "White man, I want you to come and tell my people about your God." The leader of the mission group answered, "We can't come today. We have an appointment downstream this morning. We will come another day."

The chief persisted, "No you must come today and tell my people about your great God."

As the mission team pushed off to leave, the chief waded out into the water calling after the missionaries, "White man, if you don't come tell my people about your God, I'll tell your God on you!"

I hope nobody ever tells God that we heard that 40,000 children are dying each day from hunger related diseases and we did so little to help.

## Readings

*Matthew 14:13–21*

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup> When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

<sup>15</sup> As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

<sup>16</sup> Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

<sup>17</sup> “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

<sup>18</sup> “Bring them here to me,” he said. <sup>19</sup> And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. <sup>20</sup> They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. <sup>21</sup> The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children. <sup>1</sup>

respond

For the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

## Exegesis

Matthew’s account of the feeding of 5,000 begins with Jesus withdrawing on the news of John’s death. Is he seeking solace in the wilderness, taking stock of his movement now John has gone, or getting out of Herod’s way? Whatever the reason, this story has a profoundly political location, beginning with the empire acting against Jesus’ movement, and ending with the feeding of an army in the wilderness. In between these brackets we are treated to a story of compassion in action, of the lavish grace of a God who loves and provides for all.

The crowds followed Jesus, and his response was to meet their needs. The disciples – maybe keen to ensure that they could meet Jesus’ need – want to send the crowds away. But Jesus challenges them to meet the crowds’ need for food (v.16). Rightly the disciples object that they have barely enough for their own needs (v.17). So, Jesus feeds the crowds so that the disciples will learn what compassion looks like, just as much as because they all needed an evening meal.

Although the miracle is Jesus’ doing, the disciples are invited to play their part by making the seating arrangements, distributing the food and clearing up afterwards. Amazingly, five loaves and two fish had become a banquet for 5,000 men and unnumbered women and children, with more left over for the disciples than they had started with.

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<sup>1</sup> [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

Two strong resonances in the story should not be missed. The first is the reminder of how God provided manna in the wilderness. Matthew does not labour this, but the fact that he describes the place as a wilderness suggests that he has the wanderings of the people under Moses in mind. And the fact that the crowds are looking to Jesus for leadership suggests that they see him as a new Moses.

The other resonance is the strong echo of the Eucharist in the language of verse 19b. Of course, no one in the crowds or the disciples would have got this, but we do – because we are reading this story after the Last Supper became the central celebratory meal of the Christian tradition. And with this, there is a strong echo of the messianic banquet of Isaiah chapter 25: here God's people feast in celebration of the coming of his kingdom and their place in it.

There is one other echo that is worth noting. The story immediately before this one was set in a lavish banquet presided over by a self-aggrandising empire builder (Herod). Here we have the opposite: another king, generously providing for all those who look to him for guidance and leadership in a kingdom of grace and welcome.

## Picture Pointers



- Why is there a need to share?
- What are the best things about joining with your church community?
- What would you share with them?

## Live your faith

Write yourself a note to remind you either to give something away or share something with someone else. It doesn't need to be a big or expensive gift, just generous.

## A sending out prayer

By the end of the day, the crowds must have been exhausted.

They left with full stomachs and full hearts.

They had met with Jesus.

You have fed us this morning, Lord,  
and we go out to live the lives you call us to.

May we be conscious of your perfect timing in our lives,  
as we reach out to the outsiders as well as to our own.

Bless us, Lord.

Amen.