

Worship on the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost and Communion

10:00 am August 02, 2026

Minister: The Rev. Brad Childs Music Director: Binu Kapadia

Vocalist: Vivian Houg

Welcoming Elder: Andrea Gartrell Readerr: Saber Fort

Sunday School starts at 10am *indicates that those who are able may stand

We gather to worship God

Music prelude

Greeting

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you

P: and also with you

Lighting of the Christ candle

Welcome and announcements

Preparation for worship

Call to worship:

L: God is faithful in words, and gracious in action.

P: We look to God for nurture in every season.

L: God is near to all who call out in truth, and watches over all.

P: We will praise God's holy name for ever and ever.

Opening praise: *Here I am to worship

Prayers of approach and confession

To you our God who is too holy to be seen, but who is willing to wrestle with us and to allow us to wrestle right back, be all glory and power and praise, this day and forevermore.

Merciful God,

you plant each of us like seeds in the same field and together we are nourished and nurtured by the sun. We sway in the wind and are refreshed by the rain. We are blessed by the knowledge that you want us to grow towards what you call us to be.

When we deprive others of that same opportunity,
forgive us.

When we want to uproot those whom we believe
do not belong in our part of the field,
forgive us.

When we label others as good or bad
rather than accept them for who they are,
forgive us.

When we are reluctant to acknowledge
that we ourselves are a mixture of weeds and wheat,
forgive us.

When we are afraid to look into the fields of our own lives
to see what is truly growing there,
forgive us.

Our God, you know us inside and out, through and through.
You search us out and lay your hand upon us.
You know what we are going to say even before we speak.
So we pray that you will help us to reach out to the uprooted and rejected,
the lonely and the outcast,
and to develop and grow the good in ourselves, in others and in the world. Aid us as
we move forward. Change us and make us better people so that we can help others to
do the same.
This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Response: *I waited, I waited on you, Lord*

Assurance of God's forgiveness

You are God's children, and God has wiped your sins clean. Know that God has heard
your cry, and are ever being perfected and refined and made ever more in the image of
your Father in heaven. Amen

We listen for the voice of God

Song: *I rest in God alone

36

Scripture: Matthew 14:13-21 pg#16 NT(NRSV)

Response: *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet*

Message: "Stone Soup"

Once upon a time, somewhere in post-war Eastern Europe, there was a great famine
in which people jealously hoarded whatever food they could find, hiding it even from

their friends and neighbours. One day a wandering soldier came into a village and began asking questions as if he planned to stay for the night.

"There's not a bite to eat in the whole province," he was told. "Better keep moving on."

"Oh, I have everything I need," he said. "In fact, I was thinking of making some stone soup **to share with all of you.**" He pulled an iron cauldron from his wagon, filled it with water, and built a fire under it. Then, with great ceremony, he slowly drew an ordinary-looking stone from a velvet bag, showed it to the gathered crowd and (plop) dropped it right into the center of the water.

By now, hearing the rumor of free food, most of the villagers had come to the square or had begun watching from their windows. As the soldier sniffed the "broth" and licked his lips in anticipation, hunger began to overcome the people's skepticism.

"Ahh," the soldier said to himself rather loudly, "I do like tasty stone soup. Of course, stone soup with cabbage -- that's hard to beat." Soon a villager approached hesitantly, holding a small wedge of cabbage he'd retrieved from its hiding place, and added it to the pot. "Capital!" cried the soldier. "You know, I once had stone soup with cabbage and a bit of salt beef as well, and it was fit for a king." Well all the sudden the village butcher managed to find some salt beef . . . and so it went, through potatoes, onions, carrots, mushrooms, and so on, until there was indeed a delicious meal for all to share.

This magic stone soup, was the greatest tasting soup the villagers had ever had.

The villagers were in awe and even brought together a bit of money and offered it to the soldier if he'd part with the soup's main ingredient.

The Kind Soldier refused, thanked the folks for sharing and moved on the next day to a new town.

The moral of the story of course, is that by working together, with everyone contributing what they can, even if it's just a bit, everyone can be fed.

The story of the fish and the loaves is another very interesting story. And it must have been considered of great importance to the early church. In fact, this is **the only miracle in the entire Bible** that gets recorded in **all 4 of the Gospels**.

Not even the birth of Jesus OR even the resurrection gets that much publicity. So, it must be a pretty important story, don't you think? And then on top of this Mathew and Mark (who tell the story of the feeding of **5000** with **5 loaves** and **2 fish**) also tell a very similar story about the feeding of **4,000** (with **7 loaves** and "**a few small fish**") in addition to the story of the **5000** which they also tell.

In John's Gospel, in the story of the feeding of 5000, Jesus tells His disciples to get the people to sit on the **green grass**. And although this doesn't at first seem to be very important, it probably is.

Does anybody know why?

(It tells us the time of year and what the weather was doing!)

See, if the grass is green - this lets us know the time of year and that the rainy season has ended.

John also gives further detail when he tells us that "it would soon be Passover."

And so now, not only do we know what time of year it is, that it's pretty nice out, that the sun goes down fairly late, that Passover is near but this also explains why there are so many people around.

Because Jews from all over the known world travelled to the Temple for Passover.

Now about this time: Jesus had been teaching all day; he started off in one place and then travelled to another by boat. But the Bible says that the people followed him "running from town to town to get ahead of him" So by this time, Jesus has been teaching all day long - it was getting dark. So in Matthew's verse 15 it says, "By this time, it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a remote place, and it's already getting very late.'"

So there Jesus was, **surrounded** by people, the day coming to a close.

The crowd was **huge**. We're told at the end of the story that there were "**about... 5000... men...**".

This is a detail that all four witnesses remembered.
All four gospels provide this same number, 5,000.

Exact numbers of course, meant little to the first century Hebrew mind. For sure, there wouldn't have been a disciple assigned to go around and count heads. But while people sometimes refer to this story as the feeding of the 5000, that's technically incorrect. You see, in the tradition of the day, women and children were not counted; in fact, some times in counting, they excluded the **elderly men** as well. Now wasn't something meant to be cruel or some kind of ancient slight. It was just common practice to count the so-called "fighting men" or men within the ages of military service as a shortcut for counting the whole crowd as was customary at the time.

Of course, it could be that there were only men present. If so, that would perhaps go a long way in explaining why all these people went on a long trip and nobody thought to pack a sandwich.

More than likely, while we do generally refer to this story as the feeding of the 5000, one would think that the real number would be at least double this (counting women as well) and probably triple or quadruple this (if not even more) assuming people didn't just leave their kids at home. In other words... it's not five thousand people we are told got fed... it's more like 20,000.

No matter what the real number is, let's just say that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all meant for their readers to know that this crowd is huge.

So next, the disciples come to Jesus and ask about sending the people away. It's getting dark, after all, they notice. The markets in the neighbouring villages will soon disappear from the streets and the people will have no food for the rest of the day until they open again in the morning. And so Jesus' disciples say, "This is a remote place and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." But Jesus responds in a very curious way... .. He says... **'You** give them something to eat.'

What a weird thing to say. Unfortunately the Greek text doesn't help us out too much when it comes to just who is being addressed. The "you" here is merely implied so you can't tell if the "you" is just the person who asks him the question or the "you" refers to all of the disciples.

Either way, the disciples are confused right off the bat. "He can't be serious... whether it's one person or twelve trying to buy food for 20,000, where would that money come from?" The crowd is massive!

You gotta give 'em credit, they went out and tried!

They come back with 5 small ovals of barley loaf (poor people's food) and two sardines (probably dried and salt curried or perhaps pickled in the normal process to preserve them). And Jesus, like a man without a care in the world, directs the people to sit in small groups, and then he gives thanks to the Father for this tiny handful of food. And then he directs the disciples to start serving.

Do you think they started cutting it into pieces?

Because personally, I really wonder what 2 sardines look like divided into 12 pieces sitting in big baskets? Let alone what 2 sardines look like when 20,000 people want them.

The whole idea of this is insane! But that is all they had. So they served it.

At the end of the story, we're told that "20 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up **twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish.**"

As a little side note – at the time - left over's from a meal were swept onto the floor so that the servants would then gather them up. It was kind of like an ancient version of tipping. And here the servants pick up more than they even started with. It's sort of like a little clue in the story to say that God cares for the caregivers.

Now today, many scholars suggest that the boy in John's version of the story (who gave up the 2 fish and 5 loaves to the disciples) inspired others in the large crowd also to give up what they had and share with others. For them, the boy is kind of like the first person to add something to the travelling soldiers Stone Soup. These scholars often point out that due to the green grass present in all four versions of the story and the nearness of Passover, it stands to reason that these travelers (many of whom had been walking for days or weeks) would **not** have come unprepared. Of course, (**they say**) the people would have brought food with them on their long journeys. But in the violent and difficult times, the people **hid** their food from others **because they had nothing to share.**

These same scholars also sometimes point out that when Jesus has the people sit down, the word for groups he uses "Prasiai" (pra-sia) is normally used to describe the rows vegetables were planted in. Because of this (**again, they say**), this means that Jesus intended the people to sit next to each other but also to look across from one another and at each other where nothing could be hidden and you had to look into the eyes of your neighbours as you ate what your family brought.

Now in the book of Mark it notes:

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. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

In Matthew it adds:

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, Jesus gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

From Luke:

Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. ¹⁷ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

And in John:

¹² When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." ¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Notice that none of them give a really explicit statement about Jesus performing a miracle. Fair enough. What do you think? You might have to crack open those bibles this week and do a little reflecting.

Read this way; the story is not a miracle in the traditional sense but rather a story about sharing. In this view, the real miracle is that the people are inspired (by Christ) to give what they first had hidden from others around them (because when we share with others, everyone has enough to eat). Or as Gandhi put it, There is enough for everyone's need, but there is not enough for everyone's greed."

The main problem, of course, with this understanding of the story is that it tends to make the small boy the hero of the story in place of Jesus (something unlikely for the Gospel authors to have done).

More to the point, if the boy sharing what he had was so important to the meaning of the story, then one must ask... why is it that Matthew doesn't even mention the boy. In fact, Mark doesn't mention him either. Nor does Luke.

John is the only author out of the 4 that mentions the boy who brings the fish.

Other Scholars note that historically this has always been understood to be a miraculous event.

In fact, Mark might not explicitly say this is a miracle but at the same time he organized his book thematically around portions that describe miracles and the portions of teaching, and he put this miracle right smack in the middle of a collection of 8 miracles.

Similarly Matthew placed this story amidst a collection of other miracles.

So, are the more liberal scholars correct and the story is about people giving up selfishness to care for others around them. Or are more conservative scholars correct and the story is a miracle about the power of Christ the true "Bread of Life" who can do anything and did to prove himself the Messiah.

On the one hand, this miracle fits into Mark's writing order of presenting Jesus doing Miracles and giving Sayings... and serves the purpose of showing where Jesus' authority comes from when he does the seemingly impossible. Otherwise, who cares or at least, why does Mark care?

The whole point for Mark is that Jesus does the impossible. What's more, the only reason to write such a story down is precisely because it was a miracle. I highly doubt Matthew who is trying to show his Jewish audience that Jesus is the promised Messiah (God on earth with His people), would find this story so memorable if a bunch of folks just sat down and ate together.

Additionally, Mark's whole gospel hinges on the point that Jesus has extraordinary power that only God can wield.

And Luke starts his version of the story off by stating that Jesus had already been healing the sick through miraculous power.

In fact, that's the whole reason the crowd is there in the first place. They are following him because he has been performing miracles. It seems really odd to have a story about "sharing" just appear right in the middle of all that!

Alao John calls this even a quote "sign". So it clearly isn't just an event where people share.

So whose right? Is this a miracle or an event where the people essentially created the miracle because God was in their midst and working within them?

That should give you something to discuss over lunch.

For me, personally... I tend to think the answer is "Yes"... or "Sort of"... Perhaps both. I'm not sure. Honestly, I think the answer is "both" work.

As we read the feeding of the multitudes, we are not just asked to believe that a certain miracle happened 2,000 years ago. No matter what exactly is going on here (and I **think** something incredibly miraculous happened), it's always more than just a story.

The gospel writers weren't just recording history for history's sake. They weren't just writing down random stuff. This story is in all 4 gospels. More to the point, this isn't really **just a story** but rather a call to **action**. The people in the crowd were both recipients of God's grace and participants in it. And so are we.

I think for the gospel writer, the idea that Jesus brought with him the power of heaven was enough to reveal who **he is** and help people to put their trust in Him. That was the story's primary purpose. But I also can't stop thinking about something.

I can't stop thinking about that stone soup because the miracle can't just stop there with Jesus. Remember right after this Jesus tells us that "We" (His followers) will do "even greater works than these."

We, too, are called to feed the hungry: to provide bread to others even when we have very little. To give prayer, food and love, forgiveness and peace, hope and education, acceptance, beauty and faith and on and on.

My take: Jesus fed some 20,000 people by a pure miraculous event. He is the King of Heaven.

But because of that, we too are called to share... whatever stone soup we possibly can. And I can't help but think the story was written because both must be true. I can't help but believe that miracles happen but that also, we can't just wait on them. I think all four of the gospel authors wrote things the way they did, is because we have a part to play. Jesus is the hero of the story not the little boy or the crowd or us, but at the same time, we matter a lot. We hear what Jesus said. We can do greater miracles than "this" one. But it takes work. It takes followers of Jesus to live it out. I heard recently there are not four but rather five gospels. If truth be told I believe both Isaiah and Romans are gospels but that's not what I mean here. Traditionally there are four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But there is certainly at least a fifth – you. People who have never read the first four might never read them, but they read you. They read me. We are the fifth gospel. We have to make some stone soup and when people see us performing miracles they might just go and seek out the other four.

God bless you for your devotion, your love of Christ, your intent to live as Christ followers, your life lived as the fifth gospel and the all the stone soup you have ever are making or will ever make for His glory and His name.
Amen.

***Song: *Break now the bread of life* 507**

We respond to serve God

Our time of giving

Prayer of gratitude, and for others and ourselves

Bless these offerings, Lord. Use them for the work of Your kingdom—for the preaching of the Gospel, the care of those in need, and the building up of Your Church.

As we give, accept not only these gifts of money, but also the offering of our lives. Consecrate us afresh to Your service, that we may live as faithful stewards of all You have entrusted to us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Eternal God, we give you thanks for your goodness
in the changing times of our lives.
For every occasion you have surprised us with a blessing,
we give you thanks
in the pressures of this present moment,
we are grateful for the strength and courage we find,
knowing you are present.

Give us wisdom and patience
to face a future filled with many questions and challenges.
Help us trust in your goodness
even when we wrestle with what comes next.

Aware of our own needs and the great need around us,
we remember Christ's compassion and offer our prayers for the world, seeking your
guidance so that we may do our part to share comfort, healing, and hope.

God of provision and care, we pray for those who are hungry or homeless, and all
those feeling the stress of rising prices.
We pray for those who have lost shelter and support in fires or flooding and drought.

Give the leaders in our communities and our nation wisdom and courage to work
together to make decisions for the wellbeing of the most vulnerable.

God of healing, we pray for all who are sick or in pain in body, mind or spirit, those
waiting for diagnosis or treatment,
and all who face chronic health challenges.
Equip those who offer health care to manage the demands they face and to provide
care in kind and compassionate ways.

God of the stranger, we pray for those who offer hospitality.
Keep us alert to the needs of visitors, strangers and newcomers
and open our hearts so that your goodness will touch those we meet.

God of comfort, draw near to all who face unexpected sorrow this summer
and join with those who celebrate happy occasions, too.
Be our bread for the journey to sustain us and encourage us,
whatever the days ahead hold for us.

Passing the peace

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

Invitation

This is the joyful feast of the people of God. Jesus Christ, our host, invites everyone who trusts in him to come to this table... the young and the old, the strong and the weary, those full of faith and those who are still searching.

Come, not because you must, but because you may. Come, not to prove your worth, but because Christ has already made you welcome. Come, and receive the gifts of God for the people of God.

***Song: *You satisfy the hungry heart* 538**

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Communion Prayer

Gracious God, we give you thanks and praise for your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all people. You created the heavens and the earth, and you sustain us with your daily care.

In Jesus Christ you entered our world, sharing our life, our struggles, and our joys. On the night he was betrayed, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body, given for you."

In the same way he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Remembering his death and resurrection, we offer ourselves to you in praise and thanksgiving. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Sharing of the Bread and Wine

Song: *One bread, one body*

540

Prayer after Communion

Generous God, you have fed us at this table with the bread of life and the cup of salvation. As you have shared yourself with us, send us out to share what we have received.

Take the gifts you have placed in our hands: our time, our resources, our compassion, and multiply them for the sake of others. Help us to open our tables, to notice the hungry, and to offer freely what you have first given us.

Make us a people who live by your abundance, not by our scarcity, so that through our shared life your love may be known in the world. Amen.

Song: *Oh sing to our God

Sending out with God's blessing

Now go from this place, and use what you have to provide for those who have nothing. And do so knowing that through the power of God, the amount you are able to offer will be far greater than you think. And may the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you in all you do. Amen.

Response: *Go forth into the world*

Music postlude

Everyone is invited to "bide a while." Those who are worshipping on ZOOM can stop for conversation as they are leaving. Those who are in the Sanctuary have the opportunity to enjoy fellowship in the Great Room.

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." Jesus

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