

**Greeting and Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

The foolish say, 'there is no God.'

**We come, trusting in Jesus, the face, the voice, the presence of the God who loves us.**

The scoffers of our age ask, 'why do you seek after God?'

**We come, in this time, because God's grace has spilled over in our lives.**

The hopeless around us think, 'no one cares about me.'

**We come, in this time, to this place, because Jesus has found us and brought us home.**

**Prayer of Adoration**

Your glory flows through all generations, as you name every family in heaven and on earth.

And so we come to you this day, O God. Your grace is higher than the farthest star;  
your peace is deeper than our greatest emptiness; your love spans the abyss of death;  
your hope stretches into all eternity. And so we come to you this day, O Christ.

When our lives bottom out, your grace is still our bedrock; when our spirits run dry,  
you fill us with your joy; when we falter in our faith, you strengthen us to serve with hope and  
peace. And so we come to you this day, O Spirit. God in Community, Holy in One, we come to  
you this day to worship and adore you. Amen.

**Invitation to Confession**

We are people of worth and value. When we honestly acknowledge the guilt of our lives, we are  
open to God's transformation in the accepting grace of Christ Jesus.

**Prayer of Confession**

**Caring God, deep within, we know how we have failed to be your people. Our hardened  
hearts are closed to the love of Christ; our desire for more and more blocks the fullness  
of your grace from transforming our lives; our trust in the powers of the world reveals  
our weakness. Have mercy, God of every generation. Pour out the rich blessing of  
forgiveness on our parched souls. Feed us with Heaven's Bread, so we might be  
nourished by your gentleness. Shape us as your people, and restore us to faithful living,  
as we seek to follow our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, in service to everyone we meet.  
Amen.**

**Assurance of Grace**

The gift we have from God is this: we are accepted, we are forgiven, we are loved. Thanks be  
to God!

**Children's Time**

**Hymn #376** Lord the light of your love is shining

**Prayer for Understanding**

O God, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as the scriptures are  
read, and your Word is proclaimed, we may hear what you are saying to us today. Amen.

**First Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 4: 42-44**

42A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, "Give it to the people and let them eat." 43But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" So he repeated, "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and have some left.'" 44He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the Lord.

**Second Scripture Reading: John 6: 1-15**

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. 2A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. 3Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. 4Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. 5When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" 6He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. 7Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." 8One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" 10Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. 11Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." 13So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. 14When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

**Reflection: The Rev. Joan Scandrett**

For the next few weeks we will be turning to John's gospel, and leaving Mark's gospel behind. But if you recall last week's story from Mark, where the crowds followed Jesus and he had compassion on them, today we find ourselves back in the same scenario, only from the perspective of John.

The crowd clamors after Jesus for healing. John tells us that "a large crowd kept following Jesus because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. It's important to notice that John tells us the crowd "saw the signs." For John, in his writing, miracles are signs that point beyond themselves. The miracles that Jesus performs are not important just because a person is healed..the miracles are signs that point to the reality of who Jesus is by how he restores creation to wholeness. The crowd gathers for healing, but they keep flocking to him because of the signs.

In today's gospel passage, Jesus provides the crowds with a new sign. Jesus has been tending to their spiritual hunger, and now he will fill their stomachs. By taking one small offering of bread and fish, giving thanks to God for them, and having his apostles distribute the food to the hungry people, Jesus moves the people from scarcity into abundance, where everyone ate as much as they wanted.

The story starts off in scarcity. There was a lack of food, and a lack of money to buy food. Andrew told Jesus that there was a boy who had 5 barley loaves and two fish, but what are they among so many people. His mindset and that of the disciples was that resources were scarce. And when there is not enough to go around, that is not the time to share. It is the time to hoard...to keep what little money we have, or resources we have to ourselves, so at least we will have something.

Hmmmm. I wonder how many of us are operating in the scarcity mindset of Andrew and Phillip and the other disciples? I came across some statistics that were a bit disturbing. Some 40 million people in the third world die each year from hunger and hunger related diseases, and that a further 1/3 of children are malnourished. And yet, we here in the developed world have too much food. We hear of literally tons of food being put into landfills across our country because we can't or don't consume it all. We have pantries that are filled to overflowing with cans and packages and boxes of food that we can't possibly eat before the expiry date. And still we buy. I remember when the pandemic first started, and we were not allowed to go out except to get essential things like groceries. I went overboard on my first trip to the grocery store, getting as many cans and boxes and frozen things as I could put into the cart. Many of which I still have over a year later. And I wonder .... did any of us fall into the funny craze of toilet paper hoarding???

As always, Jesus turns our preferred mindsets upside down and inside out, as he did in today's story where he moves us from scarcity into abundance. And as the people saw the signs of who Jesus was, and as they ate the bread and fish that Jesus broke and shared, they began to see the ultimate sovereign. Why should they bow to the Roman Caesar or even the Jewish King Herod? With those leaders they were being kept in scarcity - the rich leaders hoarded their riches, while the poor just got poorer.

But there was Jesus, freely offering God's abundance! In all that he said and did, Jesus offered a change from the ways of the world to God's abundance. In God's realm there always is more than enough for everyone.

As we hear and ponder the gospel story for today from our viewpoint 20 centuries after it was written, we can see what the crowds that day couldn't see. Jesus' reign of abundance is one that is not bound by time or place. Jesus gave life to those who were bound to the soul-killing ways of the empire (and of today's world) where everything you have is never enough. Jesus ushered in a new era that opened up a new reality for those who were hungry for what he had to give.

I discovered that my hoarding of all those cans and things at the beginning of the pandemic did nothing to reduce my anxiety about what was happening because I was operating within scarcity. I don't fully know how yet, but that experience was an important learning for me. It caused me to begin asking some different questions about what underpins how I think and operate, and whether I need to make a few changes that open up more of a mindset of abundance. And maybe that is also something that we can begin to ask ourselves as members of Christ's church here on earth. Are we operating out of scarcity or out of abundance? And how do we know?

**Hymn of Response #683** I know not why such wondrous love

### **Invitation to the Offering**

The story of Jesus feeding the crowd with a few loaves and fishes is a parable of God's power to multiply our gifts offered in Jesus' name. We make our offering to God as we are able, trusting that God will create abundance from what we have to give.

### **Prayer of Dedication**

God of abundant love, we offer our gifts to you willingly, yet sometimes we wonder what they can achieve in a world of great need. Bless our gifts and multiply them in your love. Surprise us with your power, working in us and through us, to accomplish worthy things in the name of Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. Amen.

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession**

Loving God, You are our Creator and Sustainer. When You open Your hand, You satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing. And so we look to You whenever we are in need, trusting in Your love and Your abundant goodness. As You once fed the hungry crowds with five loaves and two small fish, we ask that You would again fill those who are empty this day.

Pour out Your Spirit on all who hunger and thirst.

We pray for those who are physically hungry—whose stomachs are empty. We think especially of the people in Somalia and Eastern Africa who are facing critical food shortages; who are suffering the effects of malnutrition and starvation; and watching helplessly as loved ones die.

**Lord, in Your mercy, open Your hand. Pour out Your Spirit, so that they may be filled.**

We pray for those who are empty emotionally—who are lonely and long for companionship and love, who are caught in the grip of depression or overwhelmed with grief.

**Lord, in Your mercy, open Your hand. Pour out Your Spirit, so that they may be filled.**

We pray for those who are spiritually empty—who are troubled, but don't know where to turn; who long for purpose and meaning, but don't know where to look; who need You, but do not yet know You.

**Lord, in Your mercy, open Your hand. Pour out Your Spirit, so that they may be filled.**

God, we praise You for Your abundant gifts in our lives. Pour out Your Spirit on us as well. Fill us with Your compassion and love, so that we would willingly share some of our abundance with those who have need.

**Lord, in Your mercy, open Your hand. Pour out Your Spirit, so that we may be filled.**

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who came so that all of humanity might come to know the abundant life that comes from You, and who taught us to pray:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy 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.**

### **Benediction**

May the grace of God, deeper than our imagination; the strength of Christ, stronger than any need; and the communion of the Holy Spirit, guide and sustain you today, and in all your tomorrows. Amen.