

## Loaves and Fishes

By Barbara S. Dehlinger, CLP/CRE

August 8, 2021

Scripture: John 6:1-14

### *Feeding the Five Thousand*

[\(Mt 14:13–21; Mk 6:34–44; Lk 9:10–17\)](#)

**6** After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias.<sup>a</sup> **2** A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. **3** Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. **4** Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. **5** When 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?” **6** He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. **7** Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages<sup>b</sup> would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” **8** One 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?” **10** Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they<sup>c</sup> sat down, about five thousand in all. **11** Then 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. **12** When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” **13** So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. **14** When 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.”

*Please Pray with me: Holy God, come and illumine our hearts and minds today. May this your word give us the power to comprehend, with all the saints, the length, and width, the height and depth of the love of Christ and*

*the fullness of life with you. Walk with us, as we try to understand your abundant generosity and care for us, hear our prayer, for it is in Your Son's name we pray. AMEN*

I'm from the first century, we live in Nazareth under Roman Rule. I'm old and I'm crippled so I stay with my Son because he needs my help and in turn helps me. He has three fine son's and no one else to help. So, I cook and clean, I try to do what I can to be of assistance. I used to have more time, especially before my Son's wife died, but now I do most of the work myself. The older boys are a good help, but they don't have much time before they go to the Synagogue School each day. They have a lot to learn, it keeps them busy.

But right now, we're visiting an old friend, Lala, and her daughter Mary. They live in Magdala along the coast of the Sea of Galilee. But, Mary hasn't been around much, and her mother needs her. It's not right that she should go chasing off after that itinerant preacher that she likes so well. She follows him and his group of men everywhere, now people are starting to talk. Folks are suggesting she's become a 'camp follower' or even worse. I know Mary, she's a good girl but she's just so taken up with this new Rabbi, that she's lost all sense. Anyway, the boys and I came up with my son who's here helping EZ, well Ezekiel, that's his real name, he is Lala's son. He's a stone mason, a really good one and he needed some help on a project. So my son said he'd come help and it'd be a change of pace for me and the boys. The older boys are still going to school, here. The Synagogue school has pretty much the same lessons where ever you are so it keeps the boys on track. I think they'll have their Bar Mitzvah in about a year when the younger one is ready. They want to do this together. Anyway, Lala and I have a pleasant time visiting and I can help her like she helped me when my children were born and when the grandson's Mother died. I hear a lot of worry in her voice when she speaks of Mary. This isn't like her, it's not how Mary was raised. I worry what will become of her. She's been following this Preacher, Jesus, for almost 2 years, that's long enough, she's needed at home.

A few days ago, the Boys and their father and EZ went to hear this new Rabbi, Jesus, speak up at Korazin, or maybe it was Bethsaida, it was too early for me to hear clearly when they left. They went on a boat with others, clear across the Sea of Galilee, quite an adventure for the boys. The older boys tried to be really low key about the trip and we didn't even tell the youngest one, he wouldn't have slept all night. The older boys have always been quiet, a bit studious, but then there's that little one, that Joshua, he's a different story. He typically hasn't been allowed to go with the older boys, so he was very excited when we woke him up and he found out he was going with his father and the two older boys to hear that new preacher. Now I doubt that he sat still and listened much...he probably ran around like all the other little boys, the scamps. I was really interested to hear what my son had to say about the man. Especially, since Mary is so sure that he is the "Son of God". There've been a lot of stories about the man, but they seem almost unbelievable. My son, David, thought since EZ didn't seem very interested in checking him out, he should go just for Lala's sake. Someone needs to understand what Mary's up to, step in and protect her from her own stupidity if they need to. Mary is the youngest of Lala's 3 girls, the others are married, raising families, settled, normal women. But Mary, has always been different, she learned how to read, she reads as well as any boys, she can do her numbers....what does she need with that. Well, enough about our fears about my young friend. We'd find out a lot when the menfolk get back home after dark.

Before they left, that morning I put together a basket with bread and fish for the group. Not a lot to eat, but usually there's a fruit seller or someone offering snacks at an event like this, so I wasn't too worried. Joshua was thrilled when his Dad, David told him that he was in charge of the basket. He had to be responsible, as if an 8 year old can be such. But after he came home, with his lunch basket empty, he told me the strangest story. Now we've heard other strange stories, before about this traveling preacher, this Jesus. But you need to know, he isn't some stranger, he grew up just down the street from where we live in Nazareth. He was a good boy, took good care of his Mother, my childhood friend Mary, until his younger brothers could, then one day...he just up and left. Now, he didn't

go far, but now he has this band of men to walk with him and hang on his every word. In Kana he supposedly turned water into wine, then, a few weeks ago he healed two blind men. David and EZ said that he'd healed a cripple who had begged at the gates in Bethsaida for over 35 years just in the last couple of days.

Neither of the adult men were prepared for what happened, though that day listening to this Jesus. It was well past mid-day and people were getting restless, there were no vendors selling any food, there wasn't anyplace close enough to buy something and people were hungry. This man, this Jesus seemed to sense this and asked if any in the crowd had anything for lunch. Well, Our little man Joshua went forward with the basket of bread and the few fish I had sent. How was that going to help when the entire hillside was covered with people. The older boys laughed at their younger brother. But this Jesus started handing food out to his followers to pass to the crowd. The loaves of bread, and fishes from our basket, what I had sent... and they never quit. Now, I know what I put in that basket. There were 5 loaves and 2 fish, just enough for the family. But somehow, baskets grew out of baskets, loaves and fish kept multiplying, David said it was amazing. Joshua came back to his dad, not realizing what was happening, saying that he'd told "the man", "that it was all he had, but if it would help he could use it." And the man thanked him. The preacher, Jesus thanked him and blessed him for his generosity and faith. Now, I ask you, what does an 8 year old know about faith? He hasn't even started school yet, that's starting soon, but he's still a small child. EZ and David both felt proud of what Joshua had done, but were perplexed at how far and how much food was there, because no one person could have carried enough for the crowd that was fed. Some folks thought it was a set-up, that there really was food somewhere and Jesus just had his followers hand that out. BUT, when David and EZ both recognized my mark on the top of each of the bread loaves, they were stunned.

How do you explain? What do you say to the boys? How do you help them understand the mystery..... Some folks there were calling it a miracle. But how does someone make a meal for thousands out of that small basket

of bread loaves and a couple fish? I have no explanation. How did my mark get on each and every loaf? There was even some left over that the Rabbi and his followers took with them, I guess. I wonder if Mary recognized my mark? Did she even recognize Joshua? What would she say about it? So many questions, so few answers. Could my friend Mary's Rabbi really be a miracle man? Is he truly someone special? I'm beginning to wonder, because of the stories we've heard.

He, Jesus, WAS just like the other boys, growing up, except he sometimes tried to tell people that he was 'God's son'. We who've lived here know that he was born in Bethlehem, he was Joseph's Son, Mary was his mother. Jesus went to Synagogue school like every other boy, he was a really good student, but he didn't seem to study much and still talked as if he was in a 'special relationship' with God. Well, all that did, was make him the butt of every joke the other boys could think of. You'd have thought that he would have learned.

Once the menfolk were back at LaLa's, my son and I talked about it, we also talked to the older boys and they all seem to be pretty well convinced that this Jesus is someone with really extraordinary powers. Feeding so many with just the lunch that I packed certainly suggests that much at least. But could he be really special? Could he be God's Son, sent to teach us and rearrange our relationship with Yahweh God? It's hard to imagine that we lived just down the street, that God's Son could have been made a mortal man, that God's son ate at our home, played with my son and his friends. Could you, would you believe it? Ponder it, but how else could one man take the five small loaves that I sent and make them into more loaves than one can count. Maybe Mary really is right, maybe this is a man worth following, a man who can save us, could he be our salvation? We've been waiting for one for generations. He is of King David's lineage, he was born in Bethlehem like the scriptures promised.

How about us, are we ready for God to make something great out of our small lives? Are we ready to give up our small treasures to see what esus can make of them ....Think about it, pray about it. He's willing, are we?

Back to the here and now. Think about the characters. Which one are you most like. Joshua, playing in the grass with snakes and lizards, not really listening...Are you spending your church time on your cell phone, reorganizing your grocery list, getting the next weeks schedule in your mind, instead of listening to the sermon? Or are you more like EZ and David, curious, listening but not yet lead to belief that Jesus is the real Son of God. Do you come to Church, participate in Bible Study, but look for the holes, the inconsistencies that allow a bit or a lot of unbelief? Maybe you're like Ruthie, struggling to believe, but limited by your ability to get out and around other believers. Wanting to believe but needing some guidance in your faith. A few of us, aspire to be like Mary, you've probably heard of her referred to Mary Magdalene...that is Biblical shorthand for Mary from Magdala. She recognized Jesus, she followed him, learning from him, being filled by him so that she could spread the special Faith she acquired.

That's the person I hope we can all become. If you have things in common with Joshua, EZ, David or Lala there are folks to talk to. We have many Elders and Deacons who would be glad to meet with you, a Pastor who is committed to sharing God's Love for you, and others who will be glad to walk with you as your Faith grows and matures. But we can't help you if we aren't asked. All of us like to share our faith, so just ask us, let's have a cup of coffee...maybe a latte, perhaps a walk in a park or on the Bike Trail. Let us help you understand this Jesus who can make something out of almost nothing, think of what he could make out of you, out of me.