# You Feed Them

# Mission and Service Thanksgiving Sermon 2024

“What’s for dinner?” It’s a question that crosses our mind almost every day. Whether we’re preparing it for ourselves or someone else, or whether someone is serving it to us, we can’t avoid the fact that every day our bodies require fuel and nutrition.

But it’s not always easy to serve ourselves or others a meal. We may lack energy or inspiration for planning a meal. As reliance on food banks grows, and climate change impacts agriculture around the world, we also know that many lack the actual food needed to put dinner on the table for their families and loved ones.

Today we hear a story about a very important meal. This story is so important, in fact, that it’s in all four of the Gospels. Matthew tells us that the disciples reach the point in the day where they start wondering, “What’s for dinner?” They look around at the huge crowd that has followed Jesus, and very thoughtfully and logically think, “These people are going to need to eat soon. We are in a remote place with nothing to eat. We better wrap this up, so they have time to go back to the villages and find something.”

They approach Jesus with what they think is a good idea—caring for these people by sending them away. But imagine their shock when Jesus tells them, “They don’t need to go away. *You* give them something to eat.” Then, there is this moment of panic where the disciples look down at what they have—just five loaves of bread and two fish—and wonder, how could we possibly feed all these people with just this little bit of food?

Many of us feel helpless too when we see others going hungry. In our disconnected world where hunger can be hard to see, we look at what we have to offer and feel like it couldn’t possibly make a difference. How could we ever begin to chip away at the huge systems of injustice that keep food stockpiled in some places, going to waste even, while people starve in other places?

The good news of this story, of course, is that the disciples aren’t actually left alone in this huge task of feeding the crowds. Jesus blesses the meagre loaves and fish before they’re passed around, and through holy mystery, everyone is fed and full at the end. While Jesus could have done this miracle himself, instead, he invites the disciples into the sacred work of feeding others. In this moment, the disciples learn that when we feed others, we draw closer to the heart of God. Throughout scripture, God is described as not only providing the bare necessities, but providing lavish abundance. Isaiah describes a vision of God preparing a meal for all people, a meal of rich food, gathering us together not just to feast, but to tear down divisions and wipe all the tears from our eyes. This image of God is mirrored in Christ who not only feeds the crowds on the hillside, but has leftovers as well. Later, Jesus will feed his disciples, reminding them that *anytime* we eat together and feed one another in his name, we are re-membering him, making him present in our midst.

Friends, in this season when many of us are delighting in special meals with loved ones, in feeding others and being fed, let us remember the gift and grace it is to be called into God’s work of caring for the physical needs of ourselves and our neighbours near and far. Our offerings to Mission and Service are blessed and multiplied by God and are transformed into food to feed multitudes. Your Mission and Service offerings support and equip farmers in El Salvador, for instance, so that they can feed their communities. Your Mission and Service offerings feed those facing housing insecurity through Community Bridge in Edmonton, and those same offerings nourish First Nations communities in the Far North who face even higher grocery costs due to their location.

As you give to Mission and Service this Thanksgiving or our local community of faith’s feeding ministry, think about how that offering is blessed and transformed—from a few dollars into fuel for the body, connection to our neighbours, and hope for a better future.

In a few minutes, as you make your offering, take a moment to also give thanks. Give thanks for a God who not only wishes to feed us, but wishes to feed us abundantly, lavishly, and give thanks that Christ invites us to be a part of this holy, joyful work of feeding others. Thanks be to God. Amen.