

Bible reading: Matthew 14:13-21

Teachable moments

THIS WEEK WE EXPLORE HOSPITALITY THAT HONOURS THE GUEST.

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.



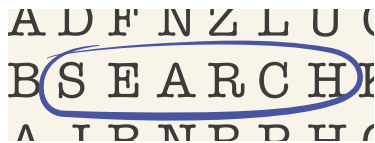
Bible notes



The story of the feeding of the five thousand follows two blows to Jesus' ministry. In his hometown of Nazareth, he faces rejection (13:57), and then comes the terrible news of Herod's murder of John the Baptist (14:1-12). Jesus seeks to be alone, but at the same time he acts to reveal God's power in him. The miracle of feeding combines a tapestry of themes. Unlike the disciples, Jesus is not alarmed by the practical demands of providing food for so many. He acts in harmony with God's will that hungry people should be fed (Psalm 22:26; 145:15-16; Isaiah 58:6-7), and he reveals his control over the basic matter of creation as the bread and fish multiply into people's hands. His actions recall Moses providing manna in the wilderness – consistently a place of encounter with God – but his words link this sharing into the sharing of the Eucharist (14:19). This meal foreshadows the feast of God's kingdom, where compassion enables sharing so that all are fed, and the leftovers reveal God's generous provision over and above what is needed. Unlike Herod, Jesus is a host who respects his guests and organises his banquet well. The numbers are large (Matthew notes the additional 'women and children') and all are invited to sit down and share in an inclusive celebration of God's provision. These guests are the crowds from the towns of Galilee, for whom hunger is normal. Again, there is a contrast with Herod's banquet, which is only for the elite. Jesus shows God's concern to care for everyone and honour them.

WATCH

Find a version of *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* and view 'Be Our Guest' – the song that welcomes Belle into the Beast's castle. Lumière's intention is to welcome Belle, though the spectacle in the dining room is rather overwhelming. How might you welcome visitors to home or church in ways that are authentic and genuinely meet the needs of the guest(s)? Who could you invite round for a cup of coffee or ice-cream this week?



Find out about your local authority's HAF Holiday Activities and Food programme, or equivalent if you live outside the UK. Is your church involved in this work? Consider ways that you may be able to show support to schemes such as these.



BAKE

Make Rocky Road to share

You will need: digestive biscuits, marshmallows, cherries, raisins, chocolate; cupcake cases.

Safely melt the chocolate in a microwave or on the hob. Crush the biscuits into a large bowl and mix in the rest of the ingredients. Carefully pour the melted chocolate over the mixture and stir. Spoon into cupcake cases and refrigerate. When set, share your Rocky Road with others as a reminder of God's generosity.

First impressions

- What might a celebration look like if the most important thing was to honour those invited?
- And what would church look like given the same aim?
- How might we offer 'radical hospitality' without getting burnt out?



A sending out prayer

Loving God,
thank you for using our small contributions.
Help us not to doubt
that we each have something to offer,
and that, when we trustfully offer it to you,
you do amazing things for us, among us and through us –
in Jesus' name.

Amen.



Read or listen to Malcolm Guite's poem, 'Where to get bread'.
<https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2015/07/31/i-am-the-bread-of-life/>
What does the poem suggest about humanity? And what does it say about who Jesus is? Can you think of someone to share this poem with?