

# Harvest Thanksgiving

Harvest Thanksgiving 13 October 2019/Parish of St. John the Baptist, North Sydney

Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalm 100; Philippians 4:4-9; John 6:25-35

Collect of the Day: Creator of the fruitful earth, you made us stewards of all things. Give us grateful hearts for all your goodness, and steadfast wills to use your bounty well, that the whole human family, today and in generations to come, may with us give thanks for the riches of your creation. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

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In the name of the One Holy Undivided True God: +Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

“What are you thankful for today?” Jesus might as well have asked the crowd this question.

After all, the day before, in John’s Gospel, Jesus took care of the same crowd that is now meeting him on the other side of the lake, as John tells it. Where were they coming from? And, what were they doing yesterday *on that side* of the lake? In order to grasp today’s Gospel for this Thanksgiving Sunday, we need to take a look at what happens just before it. Because what just happened, could not have happened if it had not been for the previous day.

The crowds finally catch up with Jesus. You see, they keep following him. And, as they do, the crowd just keeps growing larger and larger. Who could blame them? After all, they are the eyewitnesses to the signs and wonders that he is doing. Many there were on the receiving end of his amazing work, or they knew someone who was, or maybe some were just there because crowds attract. Whatever the reason for them all being there, there they were.



Just yesterday, when Jesus saw the large crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, “Where will we get enough food to feed all these people?” He said this to test Philip, since he already knew what he was going to do. Philip answered, “Don’t you know that it would take almost a year’s wages just to buy only a little bread for each of these people?” Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the disciples. He spoke up and said, “There is a boy here who has five small loaves of barley bread and two fish. But what good is that with all these people?” The ground was covered with grass, and Jesus told his disciples to have everyone sit down. About five thousand men were in the crowd. Jesus took the bread in his hands and gave thanks to God. Then he passed the bread to the people, and he did the same with the fish, until everyone had plenty to eat. The people ate all they wanted, and Jesus told his disciples to gather up the leftovers, so that nothing would be wasted. The disciples gathered them up and filled twelve large baskets with what was left over from the five barley loaves. After the people had seen Jesus work this miracle, they began saying, “This must be the Prophet who is to come into the world!” (John 6:5-14).

Notice what just happened. When Jesus meets the physical needs of the people, as in satisfying their hunger, there are spiritual implications.

This is so, because when our Lord took the bread, broke it and gave it, feeding the crowd of 5,000; he offered them a foretaste of what was to come. He revealed something of his true identity with them. And, what came was his offering up of himself as a living sacrifice.

Yesterday, the people took notice. After the people had seen Jesus work this miracle and were fed, they began saying, “This must be the Prophet who is to come into the world!” (John 6:14).

What are you thankful for today? Jesus might as well have asked them this question. The 5,000 were fed and their appetites were satisfied. And, Jesus gives them more than just that. Meeting not only their physical hunger; he feeds them spiritually.

If there is any doubt to this, just look at what happens the next day. The crowd meets up with Jesus again and he teaches them. *“Don’t work for food that spoils. Work for food that gives eternal life”* (John 6:27).

Remember yesterday when the people are beginning to get who Jesus is? “This must be the Prophet who is to come into the world!” Today, he affirms this. He affirms that *“The Son of Man will give you this food, because God the Father has given him the right to do so...God wants you to have faith in the one he sent...My Father is the one who gives you the true bread from heaven. And the bread that God gives is the one who came down from heaven to give life to the world.”*

*The people said, “Lord, give us this bread and don’t ever stop!” Jesus replied: “I am the bread that gives life! No one who comes to me will ever be hungry. No one who has faith in me will ever be thirsty.”*

Yet, it seems that it’s so easy for us to worry about those daily things, concerning ourselves with this or that, filling our schedules, running here and there. There’s hardly time to set aside each day to spend with God, to listen to what he places in our hearts, to spend time reading the Bible, or praying, or even talking with others about this true bread that satisfies, the true bread from heaven that is the one who came down from heaven to give life to the world. Without this true bread, what would there be for us to give thanks for?

Today is a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Eucharist means *thanksgiving*. The thanksgiving that we celebrate around this altar is the celebration that makes all of our thanksgivings worthwhile.

I wonder, what would it be like if we would live more like those in the crowd. They were beginning to see that while God provides for us our daily needs, he is also concerned with our spiritual well-being. In other words, God is concerned with our whole being. This is what Jesus is saying in today's Thanksgiving Gospel. "*The Son of Man will give you this **food**, because God the Father has given him the right to do so.*" And so, I ask you, what are you thankful for today? Amen.