

## ***Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand***

*<sup>1</sup>Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), <sup>2</sup>and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. <sup>3</sup>Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. <sup>4</sup>The Jewish Passover Feast was near.*

*<sup>5</sup>When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" <sup>6</sup>He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.*

*<sup>7</sup>Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages<sup>[a]</sup> would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"*

*<sup>8</sup>Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, <sup>9</sup>"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"*

*<sup>10</sup>Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. <sup>11</sup>Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.*

*<sup>12</sup>When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." <sup>13</sup>So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.*

**£20 challenge - can you jump over this banknote without letting go of your toes?**

**I'm told this is an impossible challenge.**

**Our Bible story today records a situation where things seemed to be impossible.**

**A crowd of 5000+ hungry people gathered on a mountainside.**

**There was a massive need – 5000 men plus women and children were hungry.**

**Sometimes we see a massive need – maybe in our own lives, in our community or in the lives of others in our world – e.g Haiti and we, like Philip Jesus’ disciple, just don’t see how that need can be met.**

**We know that we’re limited – individually and corporately**

**Jesus’ friends had limited resources – just not enough! Philip said “8 months wages wouldn’t buy enough bread to feed this crowd.”**

Andrew saw what they did have – one boys packed lunch - five loaves and 2 fish – ask the children what they like in their packed lunches? Who has sandwiches or rolls? Who takes a fish? **The boy was willing to give his packed lunch – all that he had to Jesus.**

**Jesus wants us to give to him the resources that we have in order that he can use them to make a difference to others’ lives – be that time, energy, money or talents. When we give to Jesus he can multiply our gifts to impact the lives of others like he did when the boy gave him his packed lunch. Jesus can do the impossible**

The amazing thing was that everyone – more than 5000 people had enough to eat – so much so that there were **12 baskets full of leftovers – amazing from one packed lunch!**

I know that you’re a giving Church. I’m here today to say a particular “Thank you” for your most generous giving of toys and other gifts on 1<sup>st</sup> November last year.

My husband and I are the leaders of the Salvation Army Church in Folkestone. There are many, many needy people in our local community and our Church tries to reach out in love and service to them throughout the year. We try to show the love of God by practically helping people in need.

At Christmas time we were really blessed to receive all the lovely toys and other gifts that your Church sent to us to give out. This Christmas we gave 172 children a toy parcel. These are children who have very few toys and whose lives are very difficult for a whole variety of reasons. The parents of the children who received toy parcels all received a box of chocolates as for some again they may not have received any other presents.

20 ladies gifts were given to our local women’s refuge and we also sent a large box of lovely new toys to the refuge to be used by children who had had to leave their own toys behind when quickly moving out of dangerous situations.

15 families received Iceland vouchers to buy a Christmas dinner and 78 people who would otherwise have been on their own sat down and had a Christmas dinner at the Salvation Army in Folkestone.

The generous giving of your Church helped to make this possible. So I really want to say a big thank you to all of you who gave gifts.

During the winter of 2008, 3 homeless men who were sleeping rough on the streets of Folkestone died. Many people in our community said – this shouldn't be happening – whilst many of us have lovely warm homes and so many warm clothes there are others who have literally just the clothes they stand up in. Many people thought that this shouldn't go on and decided to do something about the need of people who were homeless in Folkestone.

Since the beginning of December, this year, the Churches in Folkestone have been working together and running a winter night shelter which will go on until the end of this month. It is staffed by about 150 volunteers and has been described by several of our guests as their “lifeline” and a “God-send” during the cold weather. Our 14 beds have generally been full up through this cold winter. Wonderfully, a number of our guests have begun going to worship on a Sunday and have come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour because they have seen the beauty at Jesus in the lives of those who have been caring for them at this difficult time in their lives.

No individual or single Church in Folkestone could have made the difference to the local homeless community that has been made. But by individuals and Churches giving to God what they could from the different resources they had very practical and spiritual needs have been met. Not so different to a little boy giving his picnic to Jesus to feed a huge crowd just over 2000 years ago.

#### PRAYER

Father God, help us to see where there is need in our world and to respond with generous hearts like the little boy did so that your will can be done and your kingdom come here on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen.