November 15, 2026
Paul Purdue preaching

Today as we read this story from John, we want to invite you to imagine yourself in the story. Please, feel free to do a little holy daydreaming during the sermon. You could imagine yourself in the crowd or as a disciple. You might imagine yourself as Philip who notices the high cost of feeding everyone. You might imagine yourself as the child who shared their lunch. You might imagine what Andrew and the child said to each other. That conversation is not in the story. You might imagine feeling hungry. You might imagine a big grassy field, the hills surrounding the Sea of Galilee, the breeze or the sun setting over the water. You might imagine Jesus speaking to you.

The Reading: John 6:1-13

One of the things we might remember as we imagine ourselves in the story is that children were treasured in the Old and New Testaments. Children were considered a great blessing from God. Zechariah and Elixzabth prayed blessings over John. Mary rejoiced in carrying Jesus singing *"with all my heart I glorify God"* (Luke 1) After Christmas, Mary and Joseph brought baby Jesus to the Temple where both Simeon and Anna blessed the Christ Child. When 12 year old Jesus got "lost" in the Jerusalem Temple the scribes and elders welcomed him chatting about the Scriptures and praising Jesus' knowledge of the Torah. Jesus took even infants into his arms and blessed telling us "children belong to God's kingdom."

When God gave the law of Moses God told the people: *"keep these words that I am commanding you today in your mind. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are sitting around your house and when you are traveling, share the words as you tuck them into bed and when you wake them up. Tie the words around your wrist as a sign. Wear them as a symbol on your head. Write them on your house's doorframes as reminders".* (Deuteronomy 6)

A second thing we should know as we imagine ourselves in the story is that our modern understandings of "family" are not the same as those in the Bible. We have a narrower definition of family than our spiritual ancestors. (Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: "family") The Bible understands "family: as "kinship" or "oneness" that goes beyond bloodlines or legal contracts. The Bible understands "family" as a people who belong together. Jacob, Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah make up part of one family with 12 children. (Deuteronomy 21:15 & Genesis 30 & 33) Jesus said to a crowd, "*whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother."* (Matthew 12) "Family" includes aunts, uncles, friends, grandparents, siblings, cousins, employees, coworkers, widows, orphans, unattached persons and found family members..

Imagine living with a sense that we belong to each other.

John tells us that the crowd followed across the lake because Jesus was healing people. Imagine church as a place of healing.

One of the people in the crowd was a child, let's call them Myrium. The crowd was likely the biggest one Myriam had seen outside of her family pilgrimages to Jerusaum for the Passover. Imagine listening to Jesus teach. What is your favorite story or saying Jesus

shared? Sometimes Myriam got bored in school or synagogue. Perhaps, she might get bored if she was here today? Jesus taught in a way that made her feel alive, empowered, beloved.

Imagine a beautiful day, a gentle breeze blowing off the sea, everyone getting along, the crowd watching over each other in love… Elders smile as children laugh while running around! The day flies by. Evening draws near. Suddenly, Myriam felt hungry. Feeling restless, Myriam gently eased her way through the crowd to get closer to Jesus.

Drawing near, she heard Jesus asking a disciple. "*Philip, where can we buy food to feed these people?"* Myriam knew that the bakery and the fishmarket were already closed and they would not have enough food for 5000 people anyway. Philip sighed*, "Lord, more than a half year's salary wouldn't be enough for each person to have even a little bite."*

Myriam had an idea. She hurried back to her family's blanket and grabbed the big dinner basket, filled with five loaves of barley bread and two salted Tilapia. No one asked her "*Where are we going with our dinner*?" They smiled their blessing.. Myriam carried the basket towards Jesus.

As Myriam came near Jesus, a smiling disciple named Andrew greeted her warmly. What did they say to each other? The Bible does not tell us. Can you imagine that conversation?

What would Jesus do with Myriam's gift? The Bible does tell us that! Jesus asked everyone to sit down for the table blessing. There was plenty of grass there. Jesus took the bread, broke it and when he had given thanks, Jesus gave it to the people and then Jesus did the same with the fish. Somehow everyone in the crowd ate as much as they wanted.

No one can really explain what happened that day. The Bible does not explain the miracle only saying that everyone had plenty to eat. Imagine that.

I like to imagine Jesus provided a feast, not just salted Tilapia on Barley, but pomegranates, apples, grapes, dates, cheese, bottles of honey, pistachios, almonds and Myriam's grandmother's raisin cakes.

Everyone had more than enough. It was a feast, strangers were welcomed, the hungry were fed, the weary rested, enemies reconciled, and conversations were joyous. Imagine that.

And when everyone had plenty to eat, Jesus said to his disciples, "Gather up the leftover pieces, so that nothing will be wasted." So they gathered up twelve baskets of leftover barley loaves. Myriam's family helped take a basket to their local food bank. Imagine moving from scarcity to abundance. Imagine that.

As Myriam's family walked home. Her mother and aunt spoke of how when we give, God brings us more than enough. As they walked, her uncle spoke "Myriam, Who knows what might have happened if you had not given our basket to Jesus? Imagine that. Perhaps your giving sparked a miracle?" Her uncle continued "Child, blessed are you for believing God could use you to change our world." Imagine that.

Today, imagine God using you! Amen

As we ponder John's story of the feeding of the 5000, have you ever wondered what might've happened if the child had not shared their five loaves and two salted Tilapia? Could your gift spark a miracle?"