

Harvest 2024 Notes

Our text this week has three key features that are relevant for Harvest: feeding people, sacrifice and offering, and gratitude.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand is unusual insofar as it appears in all four Gospels. Nevertheless, John's account differs from the others (the so-called 'synoptic Gospels') by adding in some interesting details. The most famous is that the fish and bread that make the event possible are offered by a small boy. He is a reminder that no matter how small or insignificant we feel, if we give to God what we have, great things can happen. The other is that Jesus, in John's account, not only blesses the bread but gives thanks for it. This act of giving thanks not only looks ahead to holy communion (referenced more fully later on in John 6) but shows the importance of gratitude for making a little go far. All of these lessons are relevant for Harvest.

John 6:1-14

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. **2** A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. **3** Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. **4** Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. **5** When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' **6** He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. **7** Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' **8** One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, **9** 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' **10** Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. **11** Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. **12** When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' **13** So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. **14** When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.'

1. What does Harvest mean to you? What Harvest traditions did you experience growing up?
2. Harvest is partly about gratitude. What are you grateful to God for this week?
3. How would the little boy have felt surrounded by so many people? How would you feel?
4. The little boy offered bread and fish. What kinds of thing do you try to offer Christ?

5. We partner with West Lothian Food Bank to raise donations as funds, and also with 1st Step to run a good ministry from the Kirkgate Room in Cross House. Looking at our text this week, are there other ways in which we could be feeding people?
6. Activity: make two columns, one for things you're grateful for and the other ways you could give back, and fill them both in. Do you see any connections between what you've been given and what you have to offer? After you're done, take time to thank God for all of it