*“They all ate and were satisfied.” (Matt 14:20)*

Hello again! We’ve reached the final week of our studies on the Holy Habit of Eating Together. It has been a 13 course feast of challenge and inspiration – with the seasoning of a little humour along the way! I hope you are not ‘fed up’ with the theme by now and are relishing one last bite.

**Jesus, the ‘magic’ ingredient**

And so we come to the final course on our menu. Having looked at the ground we’ve covered in the last 12 weeks it occurred to me that we haven’t yet focused on the most remarkable meal in Jesus’ ministry: the feeding of the 5,000 (Matt 14:13-21) – so, here we go!

Firstly, this incident occurs straight after Jesus has learnt that John the Baptist, his cousin, had been beheaded. He tried to escape the crowds in a boat, to be alone with his grief, but they were waiting for him when he stepped ashore across the lake. He might have wanted to send them away, but instead the Spirit moved him to have compassion on them and he healed those who were ill. So the prelude to that amazing feast was a time of personal turmoil and sapping ministry! When things get tough let’s ask Jesus to help us persevere – it might just lead to something wonderful!

Jesus was still going strong, teaching and healing as evening approached. The disciples, probably quite wisely, were getting worried about crowd safety (yes, health & safety is not just a 21st Century phenomenon!) so wanted Jesus to send them away to buy some food for themselves. He was having none of it and, as usual, did something unexpected: he told them to feed the crowd with what they’d got. The disciples hadn’t brought enough food to feed themselves, let alone the crowd (isn’t that just like men, I hear someone cry) but this is when things get really interesting …

You know the rest, of course: Jesus takes the five loaves and two fishes, blesses them, breaks them into pieces and hands them to the disciples to give to the crowd. Before they knew it, 5,000 men (plus women and children – so probably well over 10,000 people in total) were amply fed, with 12 baskets of leftovers afterwards. The people went home well satisfied, in more ways than one …

What can we learn from this? Well here’s a few things that occurred to me:

* When we don’t appear to have enough resources to fulfil our ministry, be prepared for Jesus to ask us to do something challenging and outside the norm!
* Don’t try to do God’s work in your own strength: give Jesus what you’ve got, however meagre, so that he can bless your gift/talent and give it the power to multiply its effect way beyond what’s humanly possible!
* And Jesus turned what would have been a chore for each of the groups in the crowd (to go and buy food) into a remarkable communal experience of eating together, no doubt building new relationships and collectively sharing in the joy of that moment.

With results like that, how can we not invite Jesus in deeply to all that we do and are!

**The Last Mouthful …**

So, that’s Eating Together done. At least, our exploration of it – it’s time now to put all that learning into practice! And don’t be dismayed that your favourite subject has come to an end: the next Habit is Sharing Resources, and there’s got to be food in that somewhere!

A good thing to do at this point is to look back through the Eating Together series and pick out perhaps three stand-out points that you will take away and build into your life – yes, that’s it, make them habits! You will probably need 30-45 minutes to do it but it will be well worth it.

If you have found these weekly emails helpful then do let us know (provide feed-back even!). As I always say, a little encouragement goes a long way!

God bless you as you continue on the path to be a more effective disciple of Jesus.

*Produced by Martyn Read on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  Holy Habits is "an adventure in Christian discipleship", based on Luke's picture of the early church in Acts 2:42-47.  Find out more* [*here*](https://www.brfonline.org.uk/collections/holy-habits)*.*