GATHERING 220912

Feeding of the Five Thousand

We usually focus on the Casting the Net story – for obvious reasons. But here is another miracle of grace – a story of people finding themselves in the middle of God’s abundance. Jesus has compassion on the crowd. He takes the bread and in actions which connect us to the Eucharist he blesses and breaks. The disciples distribute and there is enough and more than enough. In a strange way, it is all rather ordinary – nobody gets over-excited about it.

And it tells us? Well we could read it in many ways.

About Jesus and his compassion – about there being enough food to feed the hungry of the world – about God’s people being people for whom the glass is neither half full nor half empty – but simply overflowing.

I’m going to choose to hear the story as being about abundance. Jesus said that he came so that we might have life, life in all its fullness – its abundance.

We want to be a missional church. Many things inhibit us – but one of the obvious things is that we find abundance difficult. Not surprising – for years we have been in institutional retreat before the march of a secular society. Things get more difficult, resources get smaller, budgets get tighter. And the danger is that we become small minded with it. We can all see that – lack of confidence, small agendas, bit of meanness and a bit of blaming. And tired.

But God doesn’t call us to that. God calls us to generosity of spirit, openness of heart, abundance of hope. God calls us to go and make disciples – to feed multitudes and net fish as if there were no limitations of resources at all.

And this is where the things which people said in the workshops with me today become part of the story. They clearly understand that if we can express the fact that we are interested in people as people – not just as potential ‘church fodder’ and if people who try out our churches find us to be an authentic group of faithful Christians in our prayers and in the way we worship ….. then we too will find ourselves in the middle of one of God’s miracles of grace.