

# The Big Picnic

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     where Jesus welcomes people and has meals with them. And I'm just quickly going to check whether or not you either looked at the church bulletin, you looked at the window on the way in to see if you can guess which meal we're going to do today.
- To give you a hint, I'm also testing your ability to know different McDonald's burgers. Anyone know what McDonald's offering that is?
- I have never eaten one of them myself. What's that, sorry? Fillet or fish. Absolutely. So any guesses what story we're going to be looking at today? Loaves and fishes.
- Also known as the feeding of the 5,000 or the feeding of the 5,000 plus, if you like to get really precise. And it's interesting because there are only two miracles that are recorded in all four Gospels.
- One of them is this story. Does anyone know what the other miracle is? The resurrection. There's only two that are recorded.
- [ 1 : 1 4 ]     And it's interesting. We are looking at meals in Luke, but it's actually recorded in all of the other Gospels. And when you read the accounts, they focus on different details.
- And actually, the way in which the story is told is slightly different depending upon who's telling the story. And it's not because they're inconsistent.
- It's because people look at things with different lenses and different angles. A little bit like this sort of optical illustration that if you only look at something from one angle, you'll see part of the truth, but not necessarily all of the truth.
- And Jesus said that he was the way, the truth, and the life. And I don't know what your eyes are like this morning. You will either see a bunch of black blobs there, or if you focus on it for a little while, what can you see?
- Jesus. Jesus. And today, I'd like us to look at this story. It's such a familiar story. But I'd like us to try to focus not on bread, not on fish.
- [ 2 : 3 6 ]     Augustine, in 300 AD, when he wrote about this bit of the Bible, said it's easy sometimes to focus on the letters of the word on the page.
- He described how scribes could make beautiful letters. He said, but our job is to read the whole story and see what it tells us about Jesus.
- So let's pray as we open, and then let's stand and worship the Lord. Father God, thank you for being with us here today.
- Please help us to look at this familiar story with new eyes. Please be with us as we lift our hearts and voices to worship you.
- Because we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So we're going to try to look at Jesus through new eyes and look at this story and see three things that it teaches us about Jesus.
- [ 3 : 4 3 ]     It should fill you with terror when I say, I have three sermons for you. But I also have a wife who likes the Grand Prix. And so hopefully each one will be a snapshot.

So I have a video for us to watch to remind us of the story. And this is from a video series called God's Story.

It reminds us that we are all part of his plan. Fantastic. Okay. It would not be an all-age service without a quiz.

And so, inspired by Richard, I shall attempt not to have anybody's eye out. But we're going to play a game called Big or Small.

I have some images lovingly prepared by one of my sons. And your job is to figure out whether or not it is a big object that we're looking at from a long way away.

[ 4 : 50 ] Or quite a small object from very close. Okay. And the suite is only if you can tell me what the object is. And I'll be honest, for some of them I can't quite remember.

So, first one. Big or small. Okay. What is this? Is this a big object we're looking at from a long way away? Or is it a smallish object we're looking at close up?

Hands up for big? Yeah. Hands up for small? All right. It's quite an easy one, this one, isn't it? Okay. Who's going to shout out what it is first? Leaf.

All right. Fiona, you as the first. That's how sound works. Got to me first from Fiona. All right. Yeah, Leaf. What about this? Big or small?

Big or small? Small. Small. Hands up for small. Okay. Hands up for big. The big are right.

[ 5 : 49 ] Any idea what it is? Pardon? It's a black hole. Jacob, what was this one?

It is, I think it's a supernova, actually. Those are actually stars coming out. All right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You get it for space. Good enough.

Good enough. All right. What about this? Big or small? Big or small? Hands up for small? Big. Okay. Hands up for big. Okay.

If it's big, what do you think it is? Might be. Okay. If it's small, what do you think it is? Elijah. It is salt crystals. Well done.

You are a hero. Oh. All right. What about this? Big or small? Big or small? Hands up for big? Hands up for small?

[ 6 : 47 ] Okay. Okay. This one wasn't so tricky. What do you think it is if it's small? Over this side. It's actually quite tricky, this one, to know what it is. Oh.

Perfect. It is an insect's eye. Oh. Sorry, Jonathan. I almost got you there. What about that one? Big or small? Hands up for big?

Yeah? Hands up for small? Okay. It's big. What do you think it is? It is indeed. Oh.

These not ideal chocolates. Sand dunes from space. What about this? Big or small? Big or small? Big or small? Hands up for big?

Hands up for small? It's big. All right. What is it? Pardon? A crater? A crater? A moon?

[ 7 : 49 ] It's actually Pluto. So, all right. Yeah. No one gets it. What about this? This is my favorite one. Big or small? Big or small? Big?

Hands up for big? Yeah? Hands up for small? Small. It is small. It is small. If it's small, what do you think it is? No?

It's a cup of coffee. Perfect. Cup of coffee. Well done. You get a... Coming in again. Oh. Good catch. All right.

What about this? I can't remember how many more I've got. What about this? Big or small? Hands up for big. Hands up for small. Okay. It's small. Any ideas?

Material? It's actually a feather. All right. Big or small? Big. All right. What is it?

- [ 8 : 48 ] It's a galaxy. It's a good one. What about this? Big or small? Hands up for big. Hands up for small. It is small.
- John, any ideas what it is? It's actually a human eye. Really close up. All right. I'm going to skip over that one.
- Well, maybe we'll end with this one. What about this? Or as you know, we'll not end with this one. What is this? Big? Hands up for big. Hands up for small. It's small.
- Any ideas what it is? All I'll tell you is I wouldn't eat it unless you shaved it. It's a peach. It's a peach. Maybe I'll end with this one.
- Big or small? Hands up for big. Okay. Hands up for small. It's big.
- [ 9 : 45 ] Any idea what it is? It is a rendering of the surface of the sun. Sometimes it's really hard to tell what's big and what's small, isn't it?
- I was doing a... It's called a word wall this week. I don't know why it came up on my computer. I was searching for something. And I was told to categorize things into big problems and small problems.
- And then the computer told me that my answers were wrong. Which I thought was... Because actually, to me, the electricity going out during class would actually be counted as a blessing.
- But apparently, it was a very large problem. Some things are big. Some things are small. Some problems are really big.
- And some problems are actually quite small. At the beginning of our story, something devastating had happened to Jesus. His cousin, John the Baptist, had been beheaded.
- [ 10 : 52 ] They'd grown up together. Their mums were pregnant at the same time. He must have been absolutely devastated.
- And yes, Jesus was God, but he was a man as well. And it says he drew himself away somewhere else because he wanted to be on his own. But he was being followed.
- And the first thing that we learn about Jesus is that he cares. Because it says in two different Gospels, it uses two different words to say what he did when he saw the crowds. Crowds approached him, despite the fact he tried to get away in a boat. They followed him. And in one account, it says he welcomed them. Which means it was like gathering them in.
- Actually saying, you know, you don't have to stay over there. You can come closer. And the other word that it said is he looked at them. And he had compassion on them.
- [ 12 : 01 ] The word that it uses for compassion is the word that we use to get the word spleen from. It's splagna. And it means like this deep, deep concern.
- It's like when we say, that breaks my heart. Or that's gut-wrenching. It's that kind of language. This wasn't just, he cares a bit.
- And because he cared, he acted. It says he taught them. He saw that they were like sheep without a shepherd. And so he cared about their understanding.
- He cared about their spiritual journey. He cared about their spiritual dimension. But it also said that he healed them.
- He healed the sick, the lame, the infirm, the blind. Big things. But actually in this account we see something else as well.
- [ 13 : 07 ] We see that he didn't just teach. He didn't just heal. He also fed them. Now, in my house I am a little bit known for just sort of working through lunch.

And occasionally I will use a phrase which is not recommended for any parent to use. Where I'll say, lunch is for? Okay. It's terrible, isn't it? I have no problem not eating for a long time.

But Jesus saw that it mattered to these people. He wasn't too busy to bother with the small things, with their hunger.

He wasn't too busy doing the big things to concern himself with the small things. And the first thing we can learn, I think, from this story is that Jesus cares about your biggest problems.

But he also cares intimately about everything that happens in your everyday life. In the Bible, a few chapters on from this story, Jesus says, you know, a sparrow can't even, despite the fact sparrows are sold for pennies, one can't fall to the ground without God knowing about it.

[ 14 : 27 ] And he says, even the hairs on your head are numbered. God knows and God cares. And he tells us that all of those things can be brought to him.

He said, give all of your worries to me. Because his care for us is for the big things and for the small things.

Jesus cares. Let's stand and sing in praise as we acknowledge that Jesus and God both care for us.

We're going to sing a song called Good, Good Father that reminds us that God is good and he cares about the everyday things in our life as well as the big events.

In the Bible, we heard that we should bring our cares to Jesus because we bring our burdens to Jesus because he cares about us.

[ 15 : 28 ] And Paul says to the Philippian church, don't be anxious about everything. But in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.

Now, I think at the beginning of the service, many of us gave thanks to God. We gave him praise. And with those things in mind, I'd like you to think about situations you would like.

When you petition, you often write things down. If you sign a petition, it's something physical that you do.

And I'd like us, as an act of prayer, to call out situations that we'd like to bring to God and petition him for.

And I will do my best to write them down with the caveat that I'm quite badly dyslexic. And so I know God will be able to read them. You may not.

[ 16 : 32 ] So, shout out some situations that we'd like to bring before God. Okay. We've just prayed because we have brought our requests before God.

Father, I thank you that you tell us to bring all of our cares to you. You tell us not to be anxious, but to bring these situations, huge international problems, personal things that we are finding it hard to deal with, individuals, and things that impact our lives.

Thank you that we can cast all of our cares to you. Because you care for us. Amen. Okay. Okay.

So in our story, the second thing, a little bit more activity for you this time, I'm afraid. We're going to play a game that we play in the youth group sometimes, which is called Bring Me.

Now, I need two volunteers. I need two volunteers. I didn't actually prime them, but that was really quite good, wasn't it?

[ 17 : 55 ] Excellent. All right. Joseph, you are the runner for this group. Elijah, you are the runner for this group. Okay. Have you ever played this game called Bring Me? I will say an object, and it is the right side against the left side.

You have to produce an object that satisfies what I would like as quickly, but also imaginatively, as you can.

Thank you to everyone that took part. Thank you to my volunteers. You have just helped me preach the next point. Jesus. Something beginning with I, something new, something vintage, something identical, something tall.

Oh, I didn't do identical, I did indigo. Sorry. Something egg-shaped and something silver. Jesus invites.

Go and sit down, please, David. Thank you for helping. You had no idea what you were doing, but you were willing to have a go.

[ 19 : 04 ] You brought what you had, and it was kind of you to do it. And Jesus invites, invites his disciples to help solve actually what was really quite a big problem.

One person hungry, small problem. 20,000 people hungry, pretty big problem. And Jesus says, you do it.

You give them something to eat. And I think they must have sort of gone, what? Even the reply which we get is, some people think it's slightly sarcastic, this reply, because it would take more than half a year's wages, and even then it would only buy enough bread for everyone to have.

And the word for bite really is like, you know, one M&M;'s worth. Jesus asked them to do what seemed to be impossible.

And so often he will do this. He will ask us to be part of the solution. And so he just says to them, well, all right, I know it's a big problem, but what do we have?

[ 20 : 31 ] What do you have? And actually, the different accounts are quite interesting. Two of them don't really mention the boy at all. You know, I don't know if the disciples went and took his pack.

I don't think they did. I think he gave his pack lunch freely. But two of them don't even mention the boy giving it. But Jesus just says, how many loaves do you have?

And they say, we've got how many loaves? Five. And two fish. And then he gets them to do something else. And again, they must have thought, what is the point of getting all these people to sit down on the grass in groups?

But they were obedient because they know that Jesus can work miracles. Because he'd seen them do it before. Remember that Jesus called the disciples.

Many of them were fishermen. And they'd seen how Jesus often asked for our participation in his miracles.

[ 21 : 37 ] He invited them to take part. And if you read through the Gospels, Jesus does lots of miracles. But in many of them, he asks the participants to do something.

Fill up the first one. Fill up the water pots and then take the water to the master server. What about the lame? What did he say to them all the time? Get up.

Pick your mat up. Stretch out your hand. To the lepers, go and show yourself to the priest. To the fishermen.

Throw the net. He could have got the fish to all jump in the boat. But he wanted them to participate.

What about paying taxes? Go catch a fish. Cut it open. You'll find a coin. What about Peter walking on the water? Come.

[ 22 : 41 ] Get out of the boat. Take part. And God wants the same for us. Paul describes it like this in Corinthians where he says, We are laborers together with God.

And just like on a building site, there are people with different trades, different people can participate in different activities. I love the story of a man called Albert McMakin.

He was a 24-year-old farmer who lived in America in the 1930s. He'd just found out about Jesus.

He was a rough sort of farmer. No preacher. But he was really enthusiastic that other people should meet Jesus who changed his life.

And so he organized a truck to go to a local crusade where someone who God had given the gift of preaching to was preaching.

[ 23 : 45 ] And he took people every night. And there was one young farm boy, a good-looking boy who was in his 20s, who he wanted to invite. And he kept on inviting him.

And he would not go. And he would not go. And eventually he said, If I let you drive my truck, will you go? And Billy got in the truck and drove and heard about Jesus.

And in 1934, Billy Graham became a Christian. Albert took his truck. Billy then took his gifts and preached to thousands of people.

That's a picture of Billy Graham preaching to 80,000 people at halftime at Stamford Bridge. Labourers with God.

And that's what God wants us to do. We all have talents and gifts that we can use. And sometimes he wants us to be part of the solution.

[ 24 : 59 ] If those prayers were still up here. In fact, can you just turn it around for me, Chris, for one second. I wonder to how many of those, with God's strength, he's saying to us, You do it.

You take part. You make a difference. Write to an MP. Present your case and tell them you're praying for them.

Invite someone. Pray for Alpha, yes. But invite someone along. Sponsor a bin that collects knives and gets them off the street.

Pray for our youth who are taking exams. But maybe bake them some chocolate chip cookies. Put them in a tin with a Bible verse on the top to remind them that God is with them and you are praying for them.

God wants us all to be part of his work in this world. So, Jesus cares, but he also invites us to take part.

[ 26 : 16 ] Let's stand and sing a song which reminds us that God has made you who he has made you. We are not all Billy Graham, but many of us are Alberts.

We have things that we can bring to God. So let's sing this song. So, Jesus cares. He invites. But if it's just us, then there is no transformation.

Jesus said, bring the five loaves and the two fish. Now, Elijah started sort of twitching slightly because I put some maths on the screen.

Maybe some chemistry behind it. Normally, five plus two equals? Right. Normally, five loaves and two fish will feed less than one hungry teenager.

And I always like doing a sort of... I like a nice quiz. I like a nice participation game.

[ 27 : 30 ] And then if I'm honest, I like a bit of a chemistry demonstration as well. Now, as this is called the big picnic, I'm just going to put my picnic blanket down.

I'm a little bit nervous about this one, to be honest, because I couldn't practice it. But you might want to just sit back.

I'm actually serious. Let me just get what I need. So, if we... So, in this demonstration, I have some...

Let me have a look. What have I got? I just need to put that in there. Sorry, I was a little bit unprepared this morning. Let me... There we go.

So, if we... This is water. Okay? It really is water. I promise you. Finger in it. Okay? Water.

[ 28 : 29 ] If we... Oh, sloshing around. And in there, there's a little bit of fairy liquid. Okay? This is... Lots of people... There's lots of self-help books out there that tell you how to sort of help yourself.

And I'm sort of trying to make something cleansing here. Okay? I can cause a bit of froth. And if I put all of my talents in, you know, normal activities, I can make a bit of a difference.

I can make a bit of a sort of... Something that can help. Something that can clean, maybe. Sorry. Maybe I'll just... I'll turn it green so you can see that one.

All right. There you go. All right. That's quite good, that one, isn't it? All right. Now, what I have here is I'm going to describe... Have any of you ever seen any of those adverts?

They call it oxygenated water. You can buy these things, and people say it's hyper-oxygenated water. And essentially, that's what that is.

[ 29 : 37 ] Anyone know the chemical symbol for water? This is H<sub>2</sub>O. O. Now, some of you might know what that means.

Some of the ladies might know what that means. What's another name for that, Jacob? Hydrogen peroxide. Or dihydrogen dioxide.

Hydrogen oxide. Hydrogen peroxide. And if we take what we have, and instead of just giving it to the world, we give it to God, then I've got no idea if this is going to work or not.

I've got a milk bottle, because these are sort of normal things, yeah? This is just the normal things that we can bring, like Albert did, to God.

It's dangerous bringing things to God, isn't it? Because sometimes he can do surprising things. Sometimes they can take time, and sometimes when I do this demonstration, it takes some time.

[ 30 : 51 ] But other times it goes a bit faster. Whoa! Now, can someone go and get some towels?

Because I wasn't actually expecting it to hit the stage. Nonetheless. Thank you, my wife's going, oh, not again.

Bring them here, not just to anyone, but bring them here to me. Jesus is like that super water, if you like.

He was a man, but he was God as well. And when we bring things, not just to human endeavors, but we bring them and give them to God, we give thanks.

It can have... I know, you're all looking really well. The steam's just because it's hot, okay, and it's absolutely fine. All the oxygen's gone now. He looked up to heaven.

[ 32 : 11 ] He gave thanks. And then something spectacular happened. Because in Jesus' hands, your five plus two does not equal seven.

It can equal 5,000. Thanks, Liz. I'll just... Oh, no, no, no, no. You know, it's just to get it off the carpet. No, no, no, no.

My hand's fine. It's fine. It will come off, I promise. He says. Hoping desperately that... Yeah. There you go.

Never work with a chemist, animals, or children, they say. So, it's fine. It's fine.

It's... Yeah. Oh, thank you. No, no, okay. You know, it's fine. It's hydrogen peroxide. Some... Yeah. Sometimes it goes on people's heads as well.

[ 33 : 16 ] So... It was an explosive outcome. Everyone ate and everyone was satisfied. And the word for satisfied really does mean completely stuffed.

Because God wants to completely satisfy all the areas of our lives. The big ones and those small ones.

He says this in John 10.10. The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy. But I've come to fill up your life.

To give you life. And life in all of its fullness. And I love this quote. This is a quote that was actually given to...

There's a film producer who made an amazing series about Jesus called The Chosen. That you can watch on Netflix. And he did it by crowdsourcing all the money for that.

[ 34 : 20 ] So people gave small amounts of money. And it's distributed for free to anyone. And he says this. He says, it's not our job to feed 5,000 people.

Our job is just to bring the five loaves and the two fish that we have. And bring them to God. So what would it look like if we all really did that?

If we brought our time, our treasure, our talents. And said to God, I've got these. What do you want to do with them?

I believe the multiplication would be amazing. So as we sing our last song. Let God speak to you. He cares for you.

He invites you. And what you bring, he can multiply. So let's stand and sing our last song. So I hope through the story you've been able to look at Jesus.

[ 35 : 25 ] And remember or think about for the first time how much he cares for you. Every intricate detail of your life.

How he invites us to take part in his mission. Spreading his good news to the world. And how he can transform us.

And through us, transform the world. Father, we thank you for your care. We thank you for your invitation. And we thank you for your transforming power.

Please go with us this week. As we head out to serve and love you. Where you have put us. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.