

# Proper 12

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July 27, 2003

## Prayer of the Day

O God, your ears are open always to the prayers of your servants. Open our hearts and minds to you, that we may live in harmony with your will and receive the gifts of your Spirit; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

## 2 Kings 4:42-44

{42} A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, "Give it to the people and let them eat." {43} But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" So he repeated, "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have some left.'" {44} He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the LORD.

*42. A man...from Baal-shalishah:* A town in the vicinity of Bethel.

*food from the first fruits:* The first fruits were an offering to Yahweh (Leviticus 23:20). The first fruits were brought to Elisha who would have had Yahweh's authority to use them for his band of prophets during the famine (8:1 ff. [1](#)).

*the man of God:* Elisha.

*the people:* The company of prophets who followed Elisha (4:38).

*43. his servant:* Gehazi (4:12).

*How can I set this before a hundred people?* Although the commentators suggest that this is a miraculous feeding of 100 men with a small amount of food, 20 loaves of barley bread and fresh ears of grain does not necessarily seem to be so little for 100 people. Gehazi was not particularly honest, (5:16-27), so he may have minimized the amount of food in order to divert part of it for his own purposes. [2](#) In any case the difference between the quantity of provisions and the number of people fed in the Gospel feeding story is substantially greater.

## Psalm 145:10-18

{10} All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your faithful shall bless you. {11} They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power, {12} to make known to all people your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. {13} Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds. {14} The LORD upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down. {15} The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. {16} You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing. {17} The LORD is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings. {18} The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

Psalm 145 is an alphabetic Psalm. The *nun* line dropped out of the Hebrew text, but has been reconstructed from the Greek, Syriac and Jerome's Vulgate texts. That reconstructed text appears as 13b: "The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds."

*10ff:* "Whereas vv.4-7 addressed and invited the generations of Israel, the invitation to

praise Yahweh in vv. 10-20 now turns to 'all his creatures' (v. 10), so that the power and salvation of Yahweh may become known 'to all the children of men' (v. 12).... At v. 13 the last main section begins, which now, more broadly than before, describes Yahweh's kingdom and Yahweh's goodness. The eternal divine kingdom is marked by Yahweh's merciful administration. He helps those who are 'falling' and 'bowed down' (v. 14, cf. Ps. 146:8). He provides food at the proper time...and satisfies all living creatures with goodness." [3]

*13b-14:* Yahweh is praised for his faithfulness and graciousness toward those who are falling or bowed down.

*15-16:* Yahweh is addressed directly as the one who feeds and satisfies all living creatures.

*17-18:* Yahweh is praised for his justice and kindness and remarked for being "near" to those who call on him.

### **Ephesians 3:14-21**

*{14}* For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, *{15}* from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. *{16}* I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, *{17}* and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. *{18}* I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, *{19}* and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. *{20}* Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, *{21}* to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen

*1. this reason:* With reference to 3:1: "Paul's intention is to write about his intercession for the saints, but it is not immediately carried out. The sentence which begins in 3:1 will be completed only after an extended parenthesis, i.e. an excursus describing Paul's apostolic ministry, its dependence upon the revelation of God's secret, its extension in the 'cosmic' service of the church, and its confirmation by suffering and courageous endurance (3:2-13)." [4]

*14. the Father:* Cf. 4:6, "one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." "...in biblical language the terms 'father' and 'son' denote basically an economic, legal, moral, educational or religious relationship which may or may not be based on common blood.... Not only the unity of Israel or of mankind, but also of the whole universe is guaranteed by the unwavering direction, care, and dominion exerted over all things by the one God, the Father." [5]

*15. every family in heaven and on earth:* "When Paul speaks of families 'in heaven and upon earth' he is certainly not thinking only of Jewish and Gentile persons and groups. The invisible angelic or demonic powers of history, procreation or dependence, tradition and law; the influence of geographical locations, of opportunities offered in a given period, of exploits, of defeats; perhaps also the magic of nationalism and a hundred other isms, or of naked nihilistic power or tyrannical ideologies may be in the apostle's mind. There is not one among them that has not been idolized and misused.... God himself is their originator and sustainer. They are not created by, and freely at the disposition of, a deity or fate opposed to God (as assumed in later Gnosticism)." [6]

*16-19:* This is Paul's intercession: That God may strengthen them through the Spirit, that Christ may indwell them, that they may be empowered to know the dimensions of Christ's love, and attain the perfection (fullness) of God.

*19. know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge:* An oxymoron. "Paul makes a seemingly absurd combination of opposites in order to emphasize a particular point." [7]

God's love surpasses the power of human knowledge. We can only "know" God's love in Christ.

20-21: A doxology. "The existence and manifestation of God's glory *in the church* is and remains dependent upon glorification of God through the Son." [8]

### **John 6:1-21**

{1} 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 toward 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." {15} When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. {16} When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, {17} got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. {18} The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. {19} When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. {20} But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." {21} Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

Beginning with this Sunday and for four more Sundays the Gospel is appointed from John 6. This Sunday the narrative describes Jesus feeding the five thousand, and walking on the sea.

1-4: "In his introduction the evangelist strikes two notes: he informs his reader that a key issue is the interpretation of Jesus' signs and that the sign about to be narrated is to be interpreted against the background of the Passover. All that occurs is to be seen in light of that feast which celebrated Israel's redemption from Egypt under the leadership of Moses." [9]

1. *Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias:* The last geographical reference before this is "Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate...pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha" Jesus was in Jerusalem for Sabbath (5:1-2). In 6:25 he is discovered on "the other side of the sea" at Capernaum. So here he is in the trans-Jordan.

4: The feeding of the large crowd took place at the second of three Passovers referred to by John: 2:13, when Jesus cleansed the Temple ; 6:4, when he fed the crowd; and 19:14, the Passover before which he was crucified.

5-15: "The traditional story of the feeding of the multitude is then presented as a sign. It is for John a sign in two important ways. First, it corresponds to the manna given through Moses. Jesus is therefore the Mosaic Prophet; John allows him to be explicitly identified as such (vs. 14). Secondly, John shows that he understands the feeding as a sign which points

to God's gracious election (a Passover motif)... The crowd, having identified Jesus as the Mosaic Prophet, takes the additional step of viewing him as the King-Messiah. But they do this in a special way. They take it into their own hands to make Jesus King and thus show that they intend to preside over the question of the origin of life. John explicitly rejects this move. God elects men through Jesus, i.e., gives life through him." [10]

Cf. 2 Kings 4:42-44, the Elisha feeding, for pattern: 1) food is brought to a man of God; 2) the amount is specified; 3) it is inadequate; 4) it is distributed; 5) there is a surplus. [11]

5. *where are we to buy bread for these people to eat:* In Isaiah 55:1-2 Yahweh tells the people "that have no money, come, buy and eat." Like Yahweh, Jesus provides food for the crowd.

16-21: "In the traditional story about Jesus walking on the stormy sea, it is he who comes to his troubled disciples. He is the origin of life (N.B. vs. 17)." [12]

19. *they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat:* Moses (Ex. 14:15f and 22), Elijah (2 Kings 7:2f), and Elisha (2 Kings 7:14f) also walk through water with dry feet. However, they all walked on dry land. Moses and Elijah were present at Jesus' Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8//Matt. 17:1-8).

"The theme of the chapter is "The Origin of Life," couched in terms of the tension between man's self-determination of his life and God's predestination to life. This theme is developed primarily, but not exclusively, with reference to the eucharist, and in such a way as to make the connection between the eucharist and predestination unmistakably clear." [13]

## Reflection

Which comes first "...that we may live in harmony with your will and receive the gifts of your Spirit?" Do we receive the gifts of the Spirit as a reward for living in harmony with God's will? Or do we live in harmony with God's will as a result of receiving the gifts of the Spirit? The way the two are associated in the prayer it feels like the first, but our theology tells us that it must be the second.

In the first lesson, Elijah is able to feed his band of prophets with twenty loaves of barley bread, and some grain. He can do this because he has been called and empowered by God. The faithful praise God for providing for the needs of all living things.

Paul prays that the Ephesians may be strengthened by the Spirit and that Christ may dwell in their hearts, and he ascribes glory to God who is able to do more than we can comprehend. Finally, in the Gospel, Jesus rejects the intention of the people to make him a king because he had fed them in the wilderness. God will care for his people, but he will not accept worldly honors for it. Even though the people recognized that he was "the prophet that is coming into the world" he is beyond such paltry tributes. What does God want from us? That having received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we may open our hearts and minds to him and live in harmony with his will. Then he will be truly glorified by his people.

## Hymns [14]

*With One Voice* (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

401 --E--Before You, Lord,  
409 --D--Praise and Thanksgiving  
88 --II--Oh, Love, How  
800s --II--O Love of  
745v --II--Awake, O Sleeper (813s)  
235 --G--Break Now the

334 --G--Jesus, Savior, Pilot  
709v --G--Eat this Bread (772s)  
701v --G--What Feast of Love  
--G--702v/762s, 700v/761s  
731v/824s, 290, 487, 467, 722v

## Prayers of the People [15]

God our Father, you never cease to be faithful and loving. Strengthen us with your Holy Spirit so that we may express the steadfastness of your love to the world. Open our lips to tell your story. Soften our hearts to forgive as you forgave. Claim the work of our hands for the care of your people. God who is faithful hear our prayer.

We thank and praise you for people who work on our behalf where we cannot be. They serve in far missions, in church and agency offices, in congregational offices, and in places unnamed. Enlighten and strengthen them for their service. Encourage them by your Holy Spirit and through the support of the whole church. God who is faithful hear our prayer.

## Or [16]

*Presider or deacon*

As we prepare to eat the meal of Jesus, let us pray for all who are tossed in the storms of life.

*Deacon or other leader*

For this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.

For mercy, justice, and peace in the world.

For farmers and a good harvest, for travelers and those on vacation, and for safety from violent storms.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the dying, the poor and the oppressed, prisoners and captives, and for their families.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead.

For ourselves, our families, our companions, and all those we love.

Lifting our voices with all creation, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

Father of glory, hear the prayers we offer you this day, strengthen us with your Spirit, and let your Son dwell in our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Notes

[1] John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*. Second, Fully Revised, Edition. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970, p. 500.

[2] In this Gehazi may be seen as a prototype for Judas, who also converted resources belonging to the disciples to his own use (John 12:6). "A Rabbinic tradition suggests the identification of the four lepers at the gate who discover the mysterious rout of the Syrians (2 Kgs 7:3-8) with Gehazi and his three sons." (Duane L. Christensen, "Gehazi," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, New York: Doubleday, 1992, vol. 4, p. 926.) Here, too, greed is a factor, though ultimately rejected.

[3] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989, p. 548.

[4] Marcus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1-3*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., p. 327.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 379-380.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 381.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 373.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 376.

[9] J.L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 114.



[10] *Loc. cit.*

[11] Reginald H. Fuller, *Preaching the New Lectionary: The Word of God for the Church Today*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1974, p. 406.

[12] Martyn, *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[14] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rc1b9900.txt>

[15] [http://www.worship.on.ca/text/pray\\_b2.txt](http://www.worship.on.ca/text/pray_b2.txt)

[16] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>