

Invitation to the Thirsty (Isaiah 55:1)

55 "Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.
² Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.
³ Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.
⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a ruler and commander of the peoples.
⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not,
and nations you do not know will come running to you,
because of the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendour."

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand (Matthew 14:13)

¹³ When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

¹⁶ Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

¹⁷ "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

¹⁸ "Bring them here to me," he said. ¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

A few months ago Katheine and I were on the M4 travelling home. We got in a long virtually static queue of traffic, all four lanes, and that was the moment for the clutch to fail on the car.

Pushing the car across three lines of traffic to the inside lane was hair-raising but we got there and spotted someone else up ahead also broken down so we wheeled our car near his.

I remember sitting there thinking – how are we going to get out of this – because I couldn't get through to the breakdown service we were using.

What are we going to do now?

I did eventually get through, but discovered that a breakdown service cannot rescue you if you are in a live lane and we were – not in a refuge but a live lane.

But before I got round to working out that I had to get in touch with the traffic officers, the bloke in the other car had done it for us both. We got hauled to safety by traffic officers and then eventually rescued by our breakdown service and finally by Carol who came out and took us home.

When stuck in your car – call Carol.

That's only one of the many moments I've had in life when the question "what am I going to do now" is the question of the moment...you will have had the same...and like the disciples, the temptation is to respond – because I have nothing.

In reality, I had a neighbour phoning the traffic officers, a breakdown service and a friend – but faced with a problem what we feel is helpless and "I have nothing."

That is the response of the disciples.

They are faced with an overwhelming impossible task – 5000 hungry people. It's not the disciple's fault, in fact they probably didn't want the crowd there because they had personal stuff going on as had Jesus – John the Baptist had been beheaded - but the crowd found them and out of compassion for them Jesus heals the sick and ministers to them. Then it gets late, Jesus starts being ridiculous (you give them something to eat) and we can feel the disciple's panic.

We have nothing – except these few loaves and fish. So, they do have something, but it feels as if it's nothing in the face of overwhelming need.

We can respond like that too. We are faced with an overwhelming issue.

Someone is bereaved and lost in grief. It's huge. What do we say and do? We feel empty and unable to help.

There's a crisis and it's way beyond our capacity to fix. What do we say and do?

There's a building project still short of money. Aaagggghhh!

None of us blame the disciples for that sense of helplessness and panic because we experience it too. What are we going to do?

In Matthews version of the story there's no mention of the boy with loaves and fishes...but he gives what he can give which is an act of generosity and then his generosity is multiplied many times over by God's generosity.

Jesus looks up to heaven, gives thanks to the father, and starts breaking the bread.

We sometimes feel very feeble when we say "I'll pray for you" almost as if that was nothing but what we are doing is seeking all

the resources of God's grace and generosity to be brought into the situation.

And we can pray our eyes and minds are opened to what we do have and what we are able to offer.

This bible story has layers, unsurprisingly. The Israelites were fed manna in the wilderness, Jesus feeds them bread in the wilderness. Jesus refused to make bread for himself in the wilderness when the Devil tempted him, but he will make bread for the hungry.

Jesus is successfully staying away from areas of Roman control that has just seen the death of his cousin John but he's unsuccessfully staying away from the people just at a time when he needs some time and space for himself.

His compassion for the people is what motivates all that follows.

He acts out the words of Isaiah 55 (which we heard) that the finest of foods will be given without cost.

And so a story of anxiety and that sense of lack become a story of grace and abundance.

What then do we take away from this?

That bringing Jesus into any situation is not doing nothing, it's the very opposite. We invite the Saviour of the world to be with us in the situations that we face. In that sense we become partners with Jesus and whatever it is we have to offer, however small, he can use.

(Here we listened to the song O come all ye unfaithful)

Reflection - Why choose a Christmas song?

In the video we saw all sorts of people. They were not actors. They allowed us to see on their faces their vulnerability and the need they have. And the answer for each of them, is Jesus.

It is a Christmas song, but it's great to be reminded of the central truth of God with us, Immanuel. Christ is born.

O come, all you unfaithful
Come, weak and unstable
Come, know you are not alone
O come, barren and waiting ones
Weary of praying, come
See what your God has done
Christ is born, Christ is born
Christ is born for you
O come, bitter and broken
Come with fears unspoken
Come, taste of His perfect love
O come, guilty and hiding ones
There is no need to run
See what your God has done
Christ is born, Christ is born
Christ is born for you
He's the Lamb who was given
Slain for our pardon
His promise is peace
For those who believe
He's the Lamb who was given
Slain for our pardon
His promise is peace
For those who believe
So come, though you have nothing
Come, He is the offering
Come, see what your God has done
Christ is born, Christ is born
Christ is born for you
Christ is born, Christ is born
Christ is born for you

Rev. Jon Hutchinson, 2 August 2026

