



# ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

Sunday Next before Advent - November 23, 2014

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son  
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.**

The passage selected for the sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel: "Then He saith unto Philip,

'Whence shall we buy bread, that we may feed them?' And this He said to prove him: for He himself knew what He would do."

We have this incredible miracle that Jesus is about to perform, taking a few loaves of bread and two fishes and blessing them, distributing them in such a way that they manage to nourish and feed a vast multitude of five thousand men, and the women and children that were with them, listening to him preach. And yet, he takes a moment before he does the miracle, and he looks at Philip and says, "Philip, where are we going to get the money to take care of these people?" And this he said to test Philip, for he knew what he would do. He wasn't really asking Philip where the money was going to come from. He actually had already decided how he was going to feed those people. He was testing Philip.

This test reveals the kindness and mercy that characterizes Jesus. He was giving Philip the chance to learn because that's the kind of testing that Jesus does. He is trying to find out from Philip where his spiritual understanding is so that he can open his heart to the understanding that it is only by Jesus that we are beneficiaries of the miraculous.

Philip, of course, represents all of us. When Jesus talks to Philip, he's talking to us, and He wants us to answer him -- about we're going to find what we need to get us through the purpose that he has set for us in this life. And Philip's answer is probably very much like every one of our answers, "Two hundred pennyworth wouldn't feed all these people; we're not even close. I have no idea how we're going to take care of all these people."

Isn't that the way with all of us? Our understanding of who we are and how we are nourished and sustained is infantile. It is childish. Of course, every generation thinks they know everything, right? And every generation shortly after is disproved by the generation that follows. It wasn't so long ago that we thought the world was flat. It wasn't so long ago that we thought it would be impossible to visit the moon and other planets, and yet we find continually that even though we're proved wrong again and again, we have this consistent belief in our own certainty and our own ideas of the world.

And when I said all our ideas of the world are infantile, I meant it in a literal way. Babies in the womb know their world. It's a very small world. It's limited by a few centimeters. They know the corners, they

know the heartbeat of their mother, they know their mother's voice, they know everything -- until that moment when their world begins to be shaken and when they are thrust from their comfortable world through the waters and into the light. And suddenly what they knew, their certainty, is revealed as insignificant. Because they come into the light, and instead of just hearing their mother's heartbeat, they get to feel their mother's hands; they get to be embraced in their mother's bosom. They get to hear her voice and touch her face and be touched by the father and the family and people all around, and all of a sudden their understanding of what had been a comfortable world is changed dramatically into something that is beyond what that baby could ever have conceived.

This is what Jesus is doing with Philip. He is saying, "Philip, trust me. Trust me. Whatever you need to get where you're going, I will provide. I know there's only a couple of loaves of bread and there are only two fish here, and I know how many people there are out there, but by my grace, my blessing, what little bit you have will be much more than sufficient. And when all these people are fed, and when they are fed until they are satiated, there will be twelve baskets -- one for each of you doubting apostles -- full of food to take home at the end of the day. I can not only turn what you think is insignificant into enough, I can turn it into abundance."

So, as Jesus feeds the people, what is He asking Philip? What does Jesus need Philip to do for him? He is saying, "Philip, give up your doubt. Give up your worry. Forget about the purse. Forget about the two hundred pennyworth we need to feed everybody. We have what we need. You're with me.

Whatever bread I give you will feed you as long as you need to be fed."

Of course, that is what Jesus is also saying to us. "The bread I give you when you come to communion will nourish you spiritually for as long as you need it to get you through this life" -- to get you to your purpose, to get you to be reunited with Me in Heaven. That's why Jesus gives us this preview of the sacrament of holy communion as he feeds the five thousand. He's getting the apostles ready. He gave them a little test in advance so that when at the Last Supper, the bread is broken and becomes His Body and Blood, the Apostle's will recognize that it is sufficient for their grace even though the elements appear to be so common.

This week, we will give Thanksgiving for the blessings of the year, but next Sunday, we begin the season of Advent. Advent is the season during which we look to the end of time, The Eschaton, and to the end of our individual time. As we look ahead, we worry. How will our finances hold up? How will our health hold up? How do we hold on to the people that we love? Most importantly, how will we make it to heaven? We worry ourselves sick, and in that worry, we take our eye off Jesus and we open the gates to doubt and to despair because we can't see how what we have is sufficient for us on our journey.

This morning, Jesus is asking of all of us to take our worries, take our fears, take our anxieties, and to offer them up as a gift -- to put them aside. And in their place, he is asking us to do something oh so simple -- but so hard to do. -- Jesus asks us to put our trust in Him.

*In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen*