  Grace and peace from God our Father and his Son Jesus Christ, our salvation. Amen

The story of Jesus feeding the multitude is the only miracle in all four Gospels. Jesus would call this a sign where Jesus has everyone sit and feeds the large, hungry multitude enamored with his healing the sick. with only 5 barley loaves and two fishes in this all you can eat meal where after everyone has had their fill there are 12 baskets of leftovers, a completion, which may signify the 12 tribes or the ongoing mission of the12 disciples. Could John have told this story because of the church’s growing sense of the importance of the weekly assembly meal? Certainly, it is important where we feel and touch and taste Jesus where we are strengthened and kept in God’s grace but reading John is like peeling an onion. There are several layers in his writings. We will hear from John in subsequent weeks about how Jesus is the bread of life and is our source of hope. However, today we hear about Jesus who withdraws to the mountain like Moses did and was near Passover where people may be mindful of the story of Moses in Exodus. This think this is a contrast story about Moses the greatest leader of the Israelites and Jesus. The people knew the story of Moses. This is the Moses who is the buffer between God and his people. The Moses that speaks mouth-to-mouth with the Almighty. Moses receives God’s Name and humorously sees God’s behind. This is the mighty Moses that brings 2 million people of Israel out of Egypt and across the Red Sea to the desert and receives the Ten Commandments on the mountain Mt. Sinai. The Moses that leads the people through the wilderness to the promised land. Yet, because of his disobedience he is disqualified from entering this promised land. Who could compete with Moses? John wants to prove conclusively Jesus is the son of God as he begins his testimony John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God and the Word is God. and convince us all who believe in him will have eternal life, this Jesus who was always obedient to God as he proclaims Jesus’ messianic identity. God parted the Red Sea for Moses to help the Israelites escape the Pharoah. But we have the story of Jesus crossing the rough sea by walking on water, which is mindful of the story of the Exodus. Jesus calms the disciples fear and by tells “It is I” or “I am who I am,” the very name of God in Exodus. Yet this messiah is does not want them to force him to be an earthly king. An earthly king cannot heal the sick or feed a multitude of people with a young boy’s offering of his lunch or transport a boat immediately to shore.

John expands on the I am statements of Christ, the Son of God in is gospel and his identity: I am the bread of life, I am the light of the world, I am the Gate of the Sheep, I am the Good Shepherd, I am the resurrection and the life, I am the true vine and finally and most importantly I am the way, the truth and the life.

Even the reading from 2 Kings which is an account of a feeding miracle ties in with Christ as the bread of life. The miracle worker Elisha, who is remembered for healing a foreign general and raising the dead, feeds a hundred people with twenty barley loaves, “according to the word of the Lord” which is one of many Old Testament references to the hope that the messiah would feed the poor. However, this miracle is beyond the barley loaves. This food comes from first fruits as a gift of faith, and was given to given to Elisha (eliesha), trusting in the abundance of God and there will be more. There is more than this holy food, food set aside for God’s divine purposes, like the bread and wine of holy communion as God gives us the true bread from heaven and through faith in Christ gives life to the world.

This prophet Jesus who is I am is all we need in life. The Jesus who, like he did Philip, tests our faith. The Jesus who tells us the work of God is this, believe in the one who God has sent.

The late United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold: “Each morning we must hold out the chalice of our being to receive, to carry, and give back.” We do not do this so we will be saved. Jesus did this for us since belief in Christ opens us up to God’s grace where we will be righteous. The freedom we receive by belief in Christ knowing that whatever happens to us we will be okay compels us to serve others. Today’s scriptures today can cause us to think about how individuals and communities are nourished and sustained by God, and our role as vessels of Christ and our call to service. It is how we as everyday people become the ways God’s love and mercy which are multiplied in sustenance for neighbor, community, and world. It is through our acts of giving, and our proclamation of the works of God in Christ Jesus, we are invited to experience what it means to be rooted in God’s sustaining love and to proclaim this God who invites us into the unimaginable vision of abundance. The risen Christ is the power alive in the present, turning us into persons of love. Rather than residing in a temple, this God lives in the hearts of believers and our faith community as we feed the people from all over the world that reside in our community. The food pantry is always in need of volunteers so search your heart and pray to see if you can help serve the bread of life to our community. Amen.