

TFTD L4 Just a picnic

Thursday March 10th

Today's TFTD comes from the Revd Rod Hill of Alderley Edge Methodist Church. You can find a picture to help you meditate on this well-known story via this link to the wonderful Methodist Modern Art Collection:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/the-methodist-modern-art-collection/index-of-works/the-five-thousand-eularia-clarke/>

My parents were really into picnics and I remember many and varied picnics as a child, in Derbyshire, or further afield such as the Isle of Wight. I remember many day trips to Bridlington, which would include a picnic on the beach, complete with sand blowing into the sandwiches etc.

I remember many a picnic sat huddled together in coats, hats and gloves, behind a wind-break at the side of the car. And I remember picnics in the car too because it's so cold and/or wet outside. No matter what the weather if we were on holiday or on a day trip to the beach we had to have a picnic.

When my Mum became too frail to continue to live on her own she moved in to live with us and we would take her for a few days away or a day out each year. On one such occasion we went by stem train to Whitby, where she was quite determined that she was going to eat fish and chips outdoors, by the harbour and I have a vivid memory of us sat there by the harbour with the rain coming down, eating fish and chips and being pestered by seagulls who were desperate to share the meal with us.

So, here we have a biblical account of a picnic. Is this the same picnic where 4000 people are fed, or is it a different one? Is the picnic at which the loaves were barley loaves yet another different picnic, or is it the same one? We could spend many happy hours debating points such as these, or we might simply conclude that, like my Mum and Dad, Jesus loved picnics.

You might like to compare and contrast the various accounts ([Matthew 14:13–21](#); [Mark 6:30–44](#); [Luke 9:10–17](#)) For John, the picnic provides an introduction to a section of teaching on Jesus as the bread of life Jn 6.22ff, Mark tells us the story, with a few little details that may suggest that he was actually there when this little incident happened, like the grass was green, and then he moves on. Mark is a really

fast-paced and punchy gospel. It's much more terse than in John, for example. Quickly the story moves on to Jesus walking on the water, but there's an interesting little verse that we often gloss over in the pace of the story v [46](#) "After bidding them farewell, He went up on the mountain to pray."

It's quite clear that, for Jesus, prayer was an essential part of his rhythm of life, an essential part of his staying in close relationship with his heavenly father. Over the years I have found it to be true myself, that when I take time to draw aside and pray it is easier to be in touch with God. As the old saying has it, when God seems far away, guess who moved???



In the chaos of war in Europe and massive numbers of people fleeing their homes, when all of that adds to the trauma of people in Yemen, the Horn of Africa, or elsewhere fleeing from their homes in terror at the violence and destruction of warfare it's easy for us, at the distance we are from these unspeakable events, to feel that there is little that we can do. And perhaps to follow Jesus and draw aside to pray is all that we can do, but it is what we can do. So, I invite you, like Jesus, to draw aside each day (the Methodist church suggests at 7pm) and to read Psalm 31 and pray for the people of Ukraine and displaced people everywhere.

When prayer is the best that we can do, it is just that, the best that we can do!

Methodist Minister
Lent 2022

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ALDERLEY
LENT GROUPS 2022

HOLY HABITS:
Exploring the Adventure of Discipleship

The theme for this year's Churches Together Lent Groups is HOLY HABITS, based on the book by Andrew Roberts (below). There will be two groups, one meeting at St Philip & St James on Mondays at 7.30 pm and the other at Alderley Edge Methodist Church on Thursdays at 2.30 pm.

LENT 1: FEASTING AND FASTING (Holy Habits chapter 14)

LENT 2: MORALITY TALES @ SPJ on Tuesday 15th March, 7.30 pm

LENT 3: PRAYER (Holy Habits chapter 11)

LENT 4: SERVICE (Holy Habits chapter 13)

LENT 5: BREAKING of BREAD (Holy Habits chapter 10)

THE BOOK: Andrew Roberts, *Holy Habits* (Malcolm Down 2016). Order from Maxine Drabble for £8.50: maxinedrabble@icloud.com

THE WEBSITE: *Holy Habits: Missional Discipleship Resources for Churches* (Bible Reading Fellowship): <https://www.holyhabits.org.uk>