

# Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

## *May The St. Anne's Variant Be Highly Contagious*

*“One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?’ Jesus said, ‘Make the people sit down.’ Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about 5,000 in all. 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.”*

—The Gospel of John

By Ken Woodley

*(News Flash!!: The Delta Variant isn't alone in Appomattox County. The St. Anne's Episcopal Church Variant has been spotted, too!! More later...)*

The most compelling stories—truth or fiction—all seem to have a heroic figure.

And the more unlikely the hero, the better.

The truest heroes aren't those who stick out obviously from the crowd. They aren't generals or governors. The truly inspiring heroes are men and women, or children, that the average person can relate to, and so aspire to emulate when their time comes to step up and accept a difficult challenge.

So, the hero of this famous parable isn't Andrew. And, despite this legendary miracle, the hero isn't Jesus, either.

No, the heroic figure in this story is the anonymous boy.

Anonymous in name, but perhaps we know more about him than we think.

For example, we know that he came to see Jesus. That tells us a great deal. And he apparently alone because there is no mention of any parent or adult with him. That tells us even more.

So he is brave, questing and probably quite spiritual.

Perhaps not unlike Jesus was as a youth.

And he brought five barley loaves and two fish. Nobody else in the crowd had any food, according to the author of this heroic account.

Why did the boy have the loaves and fishes? If he had traveled far, the bread and fish might have been all the food he had to survive the journey. Or, if he'd come only a short distance, the boy might have arrived prepared to share his food with others. For that is what he certainly did.

Either way, he is also of a giving, compassionate nature. Perhaps not unlike Jesus was as a boy. And that makes me wonder.

I especially wonder what Jesus said to the boy as Andrew and the other disciples were telling 5,000 people to sit down.

Jesus didn't just walk up and take the five barley loaves and two fish from the youngster. Of course not. He would have spoken to the boy about the hunger of the people all around him, and the wondrous possibilities if the boy gave him the loaves and fishes.

Or, equally possible, Jesus might not have had to say a word. The boy's heart was clearly opened to any possibility because he had come to see Jesus. So perhaps he simply stepped forward and offered all he had.

Jesus once said that unless one becomes like a little child it will be impossible to enter the kingdom of heaven. This parable shows us what he meant by that.

The boy didn't make a fuss about giving Jesus all of the food he'd brought with him. There was no argument. Their conversation attracted nobody's attention because there is nothing written about it. All the words were spoken quietly between Jesus and the boy.

Nor did the boy question Jesus' ability to feed so many people with so little food. No, Andrew, the adult, had done that. The boy simply gave Jesus the five loaves and two fish, fully expecting Jesus to feed everyone there.

The boy clearly had the strong faith of innocence, the kind of faith that could walk on water. I wonder if Jesus saw himself in the boy, recognized a kindred spirit.

I suspect that he did.

No, there would have been no famous miracle without this unknown boy who knew the Kingdom of Heaven when he saw it. And, standing there with Jesus, that child made the Kingdom of Heaven manifest to the 5,000.

He isn't alone.

Which brings me back to what I call "The St. Anne's Variant."

While writing this meditation it came to me quite out of the blue that if we regard each of those raised boxes in our Community Garden as a loaf or a fish, and think of how many vegetables have been, are being, and will be produced from each, then this parable might easily be about that garden.

Each box is completely anonymous, too. There are no signs attached to any of them declaring ownership by this or that member of the congregation. The community has no idea who has put all of the muscle and sweat into planting, watering, weeding, pruning and everything else necessary to make those vegetables grow into a harvest for anyone and everyone.

The Kingdom of Heaven, then, is just on the other side of our St. Anne's drive-way.

Actually, the Kingdom of Heaven has been made manifest on both sides of the drive-way.

Throughout its history, St. Anne's has been just like those five loaves and two fish given by the anonymous boy to Jesus. The Food Pantry, SANE, the clothing exchange (heroic work there for so many years, Dorothy Rice!!), Thanksgiving bags, the Angel Tree, the Relay For Life Team, ECW outreach, and so many other caring acts and projects have been shared into the community.

The members of St. Anne's have always given themselves to Jesus so that miracles can be performed where most needed.

The Kingdom of Heaven has been made manifest to all by everyday folks at a church so small that it probably seems a vary unlikely hero to the world at large.

The most compelling sort of hero, and an example to follow.

So, may the whole wide world catch the “St. Anne’s Variant” and never recover.

There is no vaccination.

Social distancing means nothing to Jesus as he feeds the 5,000, wherever they may be.

Masks are utterly useless.

And the only hand-washing is done by Pontius Pilate.