

Jesus, the New Elisha (18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Isaiah 55:1-3—The Messianic Banquet

1. The Banquet of Salvation:

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of fine wine, of fat things full of marrow, of fine wine well refined... He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces... (Isaiah 25:6, 8)

2. Thirsty and Hungry: free “water,” “bread,” and “wine”! (55:1)
3. Earthly Bread: “*does not satisfy*” (55:2)
4. Messianic Covenant: “my surefast, sure *love* for David” (55:3; cf. 2 Samuel 7)

Psalm 145—You Give Their Food in Due Season

1. Generosity: “you give them their food in due season”; “you open your hand” (v. 15-16)

Matthew 14:31-21—Jesus is Greater than Elisha

1. Lonely Place: traditional site on northwestern shore of Sea of Galilee (*et-Tabghah*)
2. The New Elisha: “*You* give them something to eat” (14:16)

A man came... bringing the man of God bread of the first fruits, *twenty loaves of barley...* And *Elisha* said, “*Give to the men, that they may eat.*” But his servant said, “*How am I to set this before a hundred men?*” So he repeated, “*Give them to the men, that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, ‘They shall eat and have some left.’*” So he set it before them. And they ate, *and had some left*, according to the word of the LORD. (2 Kings 4:42-44)

Elisha

20 Loaves

100 Men

Some Left

Jesus

5 Loaves

5,000 Men, + Women and Children

Twelve Baskets Left

John Chrysostom: A True Miracle of Divine Sharing

The Lord... wished not only for their bodies to be fed, but also for their souls to be taught... [*B*]y giving away nothing more but bread and fish, proposing the same food to everyone and sharing it, and by offering one no more than to another, the Lord was teaching humility, self-control, and love. He was also teaching to be equally well disposed to one another, and to hold all possessions in common... The five loaves he broke and gave, and *the five multiplied themselves in the hands of the disciples*. And not even here does he stop the miracle, but he made them even to exceed; to exceed, not as

whole loaves, but as fragments; to signify that of those loaves these were remains, and in order that the absent might learn what had been done. For this purpose indeed he suffered the multitudes to hunger, *that no one might suppose what took place to be illusion*. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 49.3; trans. D. H. Williams and *NPNF2*)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. Reread Isaiah’s prophecy of the Messianic Banquet in Isaiah 25 and 55:1-3. How does Jesus fulfill this prophecy?

2. What are the similarities and differences between the miracle of Jesus and the miracle of Elisha? How is Jesus a new and greater Elisha?

3. What do you think of John Chrysostom’s moral interpretation of the feeding of the five thousand? How does it differ from modern rationalistic views of the “Miracle of Sharing”?

For Further Study

1. D. H. Williams, ed., *Matthew: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*. The Church’s Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).