

I Will with God's Help

Part 1 – Bread from Heaven

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
People **I will, with God's help.**

1. What does this promise mean to you?

With this promise, we commit ourselves to participate fully in the life of our parish church, and especially in services of public worship. Anglican worship seeks to balance the roles of Word (including scripture, sermon, prayers) and Sacrament. This study invites us to reflect upon the Eucharist as an expression of the habitual focus of our corporate prayer as Anglicans in the Diocese of Niagara. Before reading the main text for today's study, it is worthwhile taking a few minutes to read over John's account of the Last Supper: John 13.1-20. What do Jesus and the disciples eat? Where are Jesus' words of institution, "This is my body," "This is my blood"? Was John's Last Supper a Eucharistic meal?

John 6.1-15

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. ²A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. ³Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. ⁵When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' ⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' ¹⁰Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹Then 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. ¹²When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' ¹³So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.' ¹⁵When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

2. When does this incident occur? How is this time in the Jewish calendar significant for Jesus?
3. Compare what Jesus says in verse 11 (above) with what he says about himself in John 6.48-51 (below). Given that John does not include the Eucharist in his account of the Last Supper, what meaning does John assign to the Feeding of the 5000?
4. Do you think Jesus treats Philip fairly in verses 5-7?
5. Has your parish ever been faced with a major financial burden akin to the question Jesus poses to Philip in verse 5? What resources does this passage provide for thinking through that situation in hindsight?
6. What does this miracle teach you about God's abundance?
7. If John does understand this miracle to be Eucharistic, how does this passage help you to think about your own experience of the Eucharist?
8. Returning to the baptismal promise quoted at the beginning of this study, do you think differently, now, about the meaning of this promise?

John 6.49-51

Jesus said, ⁴⁹Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

I Will with God's Help

Part 2 – A Spendthrift Son

Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
People **I will, with God's help.**

1. What does this promise mean to you?

Jesus is upbraided by the Scribes and Pharisees because, as they say: 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them'. To this he replies with three parables: The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin and The Lost Son or The Prodigal. The Prodigal is found only in Luke. It is set out as a teaching to those who would count themselves righteous. It is an ideal way to reflect upon our promise to "repent and return to the Lord." As Jesus begins, the story is immediately offensive especially to Middle Eastern sensibilities since the younger son violates the very essence of filial obligations by, in effect, wishing his father were dead. Note, too, the elder son's phrase, 'this son of yours' and the father's correction, 'your brother here'.

Luke 15.11-32

¹¹ Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.' " ²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." ²²But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

²⁵ 'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound." ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" ³¹Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." '

2. Which character do you identify with? Which one did Jesus intend you to identify with?
3. Who does the elder son represent at the time of Jesus' telling? Who does he represent now?
4. Does the father stand as a credible God figure?
5. When the father sees the son afar off and runs to him, what is Jesus suggesting about the relationship between repentance and forgiveness?
6. Does the Christian life consist of righteous living or accepting forgiveness?
7. How does this story illustrate the abundance that Jesus claims for the followers of The Way?

I Will with God's Help

Part 3 – Jesus Calls the Disciples

Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?
People **I will, with God's help.**

1. What does this promise mean to you?

It's not always easy to know how to put this promise into action. As a way to begin thinking in concrete terms about how we share our faith with those around us, this study will look stories where Jesus call people to follow him.

John 1.35-50

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' ³⁹He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). ⁴²He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter). ⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' ⁴⁹Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' ⁵⁰Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.'

2. What do you notice about this story that is a new insight for you?
3. Did you notice that in each case it was a friend leading a friend to Jesus? How does that make you feel about your baptismal promise of proclaiming by word and example? Who has been the greatest influence in your faith journey? How and with whom have you have shared your faith?

Matthew 4.17-23

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' ¹⁸As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.' ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. ²³Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

4. There is an urgency to the disciples response to Jesus: "immediately they left." How does that make you feel? How have you responded to Jesus' call throughout your life?

Mark 1:17-22

¹⁷As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' ¹⁸Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother." ' ²⁰He said to him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' ²¹Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' ²²When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

5. Compare the response of the man in this story to the response of the men Jesus called in Matthew 4.17-23 (above). Do you identify more strongly with the people in Matthew 4 or Mark 1? Why?
6. Jesus seems to ask a lot of the men in these stories. What do you think God requires of you?
7. What is it about Jesus that you respond to? What is it about him that you want to share with others?
8. Reflect on how you can share Jesus with others through you time, your talents, your treasure, and your temple? (If time does not permit a full discussion of this question, this could be something to think about for until the next meeting.)

I Will with God's Help

Part 4 – Just as You Do for the Least

<i>Celebrant</i>	Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself?
<i>People</i>	I will, with God's help.

1. What does this promise mean to you?

As much as St. Paul seems to be saying, in passages like Romans 4, that all we need is faith in Jesus Christ to be right; passages like these and Matthew 7:21-27 make it plain that 'faith without works is dead'. Furthermore, we make an explicit promise in baptism to do the works of faith. This study asks us to reflect upon the ways that our commitment to Christian stewardship can make a real difference in the world.

Matthew 25:31-46

³¹ 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." ⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

2. Can you believe that someone could serve Jesus and not know it?
3. Given what Jesus says in this story, do you think that works done in support of the church mean that we will be saved at the Last Judgment? Or, do we win our salvation simply through having faith that Jesus will save us at that time?

James 2:14-26

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith. ¹⁹You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder. ²⁰Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith without works is barren? ²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. ²³Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness', and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road? ²⁶For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

4. If we are aware that we are doing good works, does that awareness cancel out the merit?
5. Do followers of Jesus do good works in order to get to heaven (that is: to gain merit with God) or are we empowered 'to do good' out of a grateful heart?
6. Stewardship is not just about money. Can you see connections between the themes of love, good works, faith, and stewardship?

I Will with God's Help

Part 5 – Woman at the Well

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
People **I will, with God's help.**

1. What does this promise mean to you?

As you listen to this gospel story think about our promise to strive for peace and justice. Pay attention to how Jesus interacts with this woman who, because she comes to the well by herself in the heat of the day, may not be considered all that virtuous by her fellow villagers. She is also a Samaritan and, therefore, unclean. Jesus risks incurring shame by violating the taboos of his society.

John 4. 3-42

³Jesus left Judea and started back to Galilee. ⁴But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. ⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' ¹¹The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?' ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' ¹³Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' ¹⁵The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.' ¹⁶Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' ¹⁷The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' ¹⁹The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' ²¹Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers

will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.’ ²⁵The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ). ‘When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.’ ²⁶Jesus said to her, ‘I am he, the one who is speaking to you.’ ²⁷Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, ‘What do you want?’ or, ‘Why are you speaking with her?’ ²⁸Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹‘Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?’ ³⁰They left the city and were on their way to him. ³¹Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, ‘Rabbi, eat something.’ ³²But he said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you do not know about.’ ³³So the disciples said to one another, ‘Surely no one has brought him something to eat?’ ³⁴Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. ³⁵Do you not say, “Four months more, then comes the harvest”? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. ³⁶The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷For here the saying holds true, “One sows and another reaps.” ³⁸I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.’ ³⁹Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I have ever done.’ ⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. ⁴¹And many more believed because of his word. ⁴²They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.’

2. What tone of voice do you think Jesus used with this woman? (kidding, cajoling, prodding, teasing, flirting, friendly, scolding, admonishing?)
3. Knowing that this woman was an outcast what does this story tell you about Jesus? What is important to him? How does he treat others?
4. What does Jesus say is important to God?
5. What emotions do you think swept through the woman during her encounter with Jesus? (attraction, suspicion, *fear-after all he was a Jew, a strange, and they were alone-she is defenseless*, a sense of spiritual nakedness as he peeled away the protective layers in her soul, joy at the liberation he promised, doubt that he was the one who was to come, then finally liberating faith in the good news of the kingdom of God.)
6. How has this woman’s encounter with Jesus changed her relationship with other people? What do you think the people who had shunned this woman thought about her after their encounter with Jesus?

7. Can you think of people in our time, in our city that are treated like this woman? Are there things this group could do to make a difference in their lives?

Luke 4: 16-22

¹⁶ When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,
¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
 because he has anointed me
 to bring good news to the poor.
 He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
 and recovery of sight to the blind,
 to let the oppressed go free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'
²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth."

Jesus says elsewhere in the gospels that he came to fulfill the law and the prophets, and in this reading from Luke he uses the prophet Isaiah to pronounce his manifesto to the people.

8. How does this tie in with His encounter with the woman from Samaria?
9. How does this tie in with this baptismal promise we are studying? (Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?)
10. What does this tell you about God's love? From this, can you draw conclusions about the kind of abundance that God is calling us to?