

Tearfund Ireland 2025 Harvest Pack

Provision through Partnership

Preparation:

- Please pray that God will use your talk to bless both the people who hear you and those who are in poverty around the world.
- Familiarise yourself with the video that accompanies this talk available on the Tearfund Ireland website if you choose to use it
- Arrange for someone to read the Bible passage for you before you speak

Bible Passage - Matthew 14:13-21:

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

13 When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.

14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

15 As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

16 Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

17 "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

18 "Bring them here to me," he said.

19 And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

Bible Passage - Matthew 14:13-21 (cont.):

20 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

21 The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Talk Outline:

Attention:

Do you have enough (stuff, money, clothes, food, gadgets, etc)? How much is enough? You don't have to go too far back in your memory archives to recall the great panic buy of 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic hit the news and we hit the shops, for loo roll in particular! But why? What caused the panic? The following quote is from an article in the Guardian newspaper from April 2020, "What is generally called panic buying – a common human response to crisis – is not caused by food shortages per se, but by fear.

At its root is a fear of scarcity, and this fear is self-fulfilling, because the more people anxiously stockpile, the more others get infected by the panic and the faster the food runs out." The panic buying which caused the shortages of loo roll, pasta, hand sanitiser, and other household necessities was due to fear – a mindset of scarcity. A mindset which dictates that I need to get all I can now because there may not be enough to go around later. A mindset which can only be acted on by the wealthy, or relatively wealthy. And, what's interesting about this mindset is that it is contagious and self-fulfilling.

But this mindset isn't just reserved for times of pandemic or world emergencies, we live with it day in and day out. But this doesn't need to be the case. There is enough to go around! Especially if we can heed the words of Paul in Philippians 2:3-5, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."

Empathy:

Yet, several Governments around the world have announced huge cuts in vital aid to our global neighbours this year. In an interview in May, U2 lead singer Bono noted that 30,000 lives had already been lost due to the cuts, with many more expected to lose their lives this year. The cuts in aid are a devastating blow to communities already facing poverty and hardship, the very communities that Tearfund Ireland partners serve. The scale of the need is vast, but through partnership our gifts, no matter how seemingly insignificant can be multiplied to transform lives and help people to live in abundance.

Insight on the passage- Matthew 14:13-21:

Partnership with Jesus

The Feeding of the 5,000 is probably one of the best-known miracles performed by the Lord Jesus. Unlike most other miracles it is recorded in all four Gospels: (Matt 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17 and John 6:1-14), so it must have been a key event in Jesus' earthly ministry. It demonstrates Jesus' provision and care for His followers in a wonderful way.

The event takes place after Jesus and His disciples try to get away from the crowds by boat to give themselves some time and space to process the news of John the Baptist's horrific death. Despite their desire for some time away, large crowds follow them, keen to hear Jesus' teachings and see his healing power at work. The passage tells us that moved by compassion, Jesus healed the sick among them and began teaching them about the Kingdom of God.

As the day wears on the disciples get increasingly concerned that there is a vast, hungry crowd of more than 5,000 people with no food available – just like we were worried about having 'enough' during Covid. They urge Jesus to send the crowd away to find themselves food.

However Jesus has a different plan in mind, he knows that the crowd is in real need and that he and his disciples can do something about it. He invites his disciples into a partnership with himself to solve the problem. He challenges them to find food for the people. The disciples must have realised that Jesus was serious, as one of them, Philip does a calculation and responds that even eight months wages wouldn't be enough to feed all these people.

The young boy would probably have been overlooked by many as someone who could help in this crisis situation, yet even though he was young, even though he may have seemed insignificant, even though the amount he had was small, he had something to offer to help to solve the problem.

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, perhaps wanting to show the impossibility of the situation found a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish – asking Jesus "But how far will they go among so many?" something to offer to help to solve the problem.

Insight - Matthew 14:13-21 (cont.):

Despite the disciples' reluctance to get involved the story as it is recorded in John's Gospel (John 6:6) tells us that when Jesus looked out over the huge crowd, he already knew what he was going to do. And he proceeded to invite his disciples and the young boy to partner with him in a miracle.

Jesus asks his disciples to partner with him

- To source the food
- And to make a plan to organise the large group of people for distribution

Jesus then invites the young boy to partner with him in sharing what little he has - five loaves of bread and two small fish

Jesus then brings the situation to his Father in heaven through prayer. The loaves and the fish are multiplied and the crowd is fed and fully satisfied.

Finally, Jesus gives his disciples the task of ensuring that there is no waste and they pick up 12 baskets of left-overs!

Partnership – over, and over again we read of God partnering with ordinary men, women and even children to demonstrate his compassion on those in need. Jesus could have done the miracle without the disciples or the young boy, but he chose to partner with them.

And Jesus still calls us to partner with him in his mission

Options

It is easy for us to think what we have in our hands is too miniscule to solve a problem won't do anything in the face of the enormous challenges facing so many. Especially when we are talking about something as big as disasters and hunger or the impact of aid cuts around the world. But that's not how Jesus sees us, that's not how Jesus sees the church. (option to share Arba's story here) See Annex 1

Scripture is full of unlikely people and groups of people being invited into partnership with what God was doing. Esther was a young woman who was brave enough to risk herself to save her nation. Samuel, a child whom God entrusted to relay a message to his mentor. David, the shepherd boy who defeats Goliath. And Nehemiah, who galvanised the people of Jerusalem to come together to rebuild its ruined walls.

Insight - Matthew 14:13-21 (cont.):

Jesus chooses to use us, our ordinary selves, for his mission. God partners with people to see his Kingdom come. He doesn't wave a magic wand or have a special trick to make the world a better place. As 2 Corinthians 4 says, God chooses to work through his church and his children. Even when self-doubt creeps in and we don't feel like we are good enough or Christian enough or smart enough for God to choose to work through us. He still does because we are his Plan A! God believes in us, more than we believe in ourselves.

Tearfund Ireland value partnership, working together with local churches and Christians around the world to see flourishing communities free from poverty and injustice.

In Ethiopia, Cambodia and Lebanon, our partners know their communities, they know the needs and partner with Tearfund Ireland to see life transforming, long-term solutions; and the church will be there into the future.

And here in Ireland, your partnership plays a vital role too, partnership with brothers and sisters around the world as they reach out into their communities to demonstrate God's goodness, love and justice.

[Show video clip here.](#) See Annex 2



YOU:

Tearfund Ireland know the value of partnership, through local partners we have:

- Access – can travel and accepted in local hopes
- Immediacy – on the ground, flexibility
- Sustainability

Is God calling you to become part of the network of partnership with Tearfund Ireland? Do you feel what you have is too small to make any difference? This year we have launched a new campaign called Small but Mighty. When people in Ireland partner with us to give small regular amounts, it helps us to plan with our overseas partners to see communities transformed.

€21 a month is enough to.....

€21/month that's all, to provide a family with a hope and a future.

Giving €21 month can result in even more funds going to support people due to the generosity of the Revenue Commissioners – you can talk to me about it afterwards.

If you can't give €21 a month, don't worry, any amount given regularly, will help and will make a significant difference. It means that our partners can plan ahead, if they know that funds are coming in every month.

At Tearfund Ireland we believe, and our overseas partners believe, that prayer is essential to every aspect of our work. Will you consider partnering with us in prayer? Personally, and perhaps regularly in your small groups or prayer groups? If so, please give us your email address so as we can update you with key prayer points each month.

Let Us Pray:

During your prayer please pray for the millions affected by erratic weather in Ethiopia and conflict in other countries across the world and pray and thank God for the partnership and generosity of his church.

Symbolic prayer

As a symbolic act - ask people to take a few grains of maize each out of a basket that is passed around – the basket should contain 500g – what a family might eat in one day in Ethiopia.

- Invite people to spend a moment in silence, feeling the grain in their hands and reflecting on what it would be like to have so little food, and so little variety in their diet.

Let Us Pray (cont.) :

- Invite everyone to use this silent time to let God's Spirit stir up a prayer within them. It doesn't have to be clever or complex ... it should just be a heart-cry to God.

Here is a suggested prayer –

Lord you are our Father a loving parent who cares for us, your children.

Thank you that you invite us to partner with you in your work here on earth.

Thank you for Tearfund Ireland partners who join with local churches and communities to see people flourishing, free from poverty and injustice.

Please help us to see the value of walking alongside others, partnering to work together toward Kingdom solutions.

Help us to recognise the needs of our brothers and sisters - all made in your image.

Lord we ask you to help us to learn how to live sustainably for the benefit of the poor, to realise that even the little we have, can be multiplied in your hands.

Give us and those living in Ethiopia/Cambodia/Lebanon your daily bread and inspire us to see the ways that we can partner with you and with others to see people's lives transformed in every way.

Amen.

Annex 1

Arba is a farmer and member of a Self Help Group, living in Southern Ethiopia. Like so many farmers in the area his ability to grow enough food to feed his family was diminishing due to the changing climate. Desperate and in debt, he tried using expensive fertilizer but that just led to more debt and his crop yields didn't increase.

“I tried to use chemical fertiliser but [it] has failed many times.”

Arba was getting more and more desperate.

Then last year, like Philip bringing the young boy with his five loaves and two fish to Jesus to help feed a hungry crowd, a friend introduced him to vermiculture – using the simple, humble worm to make compost.

Could something as small and insignificant as a worm make any sort of change to his life and circumstances? The answer was a resounding yes!

Arba embraced this method of producing nutrient rich compost and in just one year has been producing compost for himself, farmers in his own village and some farmers in other villages too!

Arba planted some wheat as a trial with vermi-compost on a small area of land. Without the vermi-compost he knew he would hardly produce enough to survive. But his crop yield increased by nearly three times! Arba has found that a side product of the composting process called vermi-tea has proved very successful for pest control as well.

Arba's success with vermiculture has opened up new business opportunities for him. He not only trains others in vermiculture (having trained 22 other farmers over the past year), but he also sells worms and the compost they produce.

Arba is no longer in debt and produces enough food for the family. His wife and children are involved too, helping with the composting preparation. Arba reports that “no one in the family went to buy food from the market for the last 8 months.”

“When I started the vermi-compost, neighbours were laughing at me. The job was very hard too. However, they have seen how production has doubled in my farm and the family has not run out of food almost year-round”.

“I started producing yam [in] February 2025, an expensive food item rarely eaten by the poor. I bought a cross bred cow. I used to buy fertilizer, and I was in debt but now I stopped buying fertilizer. I used to pay my fertilizer debt even when crops failed. The loss was double. I have now fenced my compound with iron sheet and [sold wheat at a profit].

Annexes (cont.)

Annex 1 (cont.)

I am now respected. I reach out to the entire village in terms of training and [capacity building].”

With something small as a worm, Arba and his family have seen their lives transformed. Not only in terms of food production, but also with a new-found respect in the community. And Arba is coming alongside others too, partnering with them, to share his new found knowledge so that others can see their lives transformed as well.

When asked if the vermi-compost will fully replace chemical fertilizer, he said “absolutely!” [The] compost is very useful for soil health, productivity increase and sustainability of farm production.

Annex 2

In the video Sophie mentions the various crises facing Lebanon over the past number of years. Here is a background note:

- In March 2011 the war in Syria began. Since that time Lebanon has hosted more than 1.5 million Syrian refugees, (1 in 4 of the population), many of them unregistered and unable to access UN refugee supports.
- In October 2019 widespread protests led to the start of an economic downturn.
- In March 2020 Lebanon shut down due to the Covid-19 pandemic, predominantly affecting the education and labour sectors.
- On 4th August 2020 a massive grain store exploded in Beirut port. It left more than 200 people dead, 7,000 people injured and damaged 300,000 homes. One third of the city was devastated.
- By March 2021 the Lebanese pound was in freefall and the price of food and basic items rose sharply.
- In June 2021 the World Bank classified Lebanon’s economic crisis as one of the most severe in 150 years.
- In March 2022 with the start of the war in Ukraine, the cost of wheat further increased and the supply of wheat, cooking oil and fuel decreased in Lebanon.
- On 6th February 2023, a series of massive earthquakes struck south-eastern Turkey near the border with Syria. These and hundreds of aftershocks caused significant destruction on each side of the border, claiming thousands of lives across both countries and damaging or destroying essential infrastructure, including health facilities (WHO). This led to a further exodus of refugees from Syria into Lebanon.

Annex 2 (cont)

- The current Middle East Crisis has led to hundreds of thousands of people becoming internally displaced in Lebanon.
- As a result of all these crises, Lebanon has experienced triple digit inflation pushing 80% of Lebanese people under the poverty line and 90% of Syrian refugees under the extreme poverty line.

Information sourced from Thimar Lebanon unless otherwise stated.