

Song of the Five Thousand

Flexible voicing, a cappella or with piano



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

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I. Canon (a cappella)

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Joyfully ①

As we share what we have with each other,

Piano reduction: Use as needed when singing this song as a canon

5 ②

Let us sing out joyfully,

9 ③

May a - - bun - dance lead to grat - i - tude;

II. Unison (with piano)

Elizabeth Alexander

Joyfully

As we share what we have with each other,

Piano accompaniment: for use with unison singing only

The first system of music features a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are "As we share what we have with each other,". Below the vocal line is a piano accompaniment consisting of two staves (treble and bass clefs) with chords and some melodic lines.

5 Let us sing out joyfully,

The second system of music continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "Let us sing out joyfully,". The system is marked with a measure rest of 5 measures at the beginning.

9 May abundance lead to gratitude;

The third system of music continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "May abundance lead to gratitude;". The system is marked with a measure rest of 9 measures at the beginning.

Song of the Five Thousand is the refrain from the choral piece *Only a Couple Fishes* (SEA-116-00). It may be sung on its own as a canon or unison song, by any combination of voices.

Song of the Five Thousand is the canonic chorus of the children's choir piece, *Only a Couple Fishes*, whose full text gives the context for the prayer of abundance, gratitude and generosity:

Long ago, five thousand people headed out into the wilderness,
Listening to a wise man,
And following where he led.
When their bellies started rumbling,
Some people started grumbling,
'Til the wise man opened up his arms and said:
"As we share what we have with each other,
Let us sing out joyfully.
May abundance lead to gratitude,
Then to generosity."

To and fro they passed a basket, but discovered when they looked within:
Only a couple fishes, and only five loaves of bread.
The amount was truly humbling;
Morale was quickly crumbling,
But they prayed together as the wise man said:
As we share what we have with each other,
Let us sing out joyfully.
May abundance lead to gratitude,
Then to generosity."

Overflowing baskets started coming forth before their very eyes:
Suddenly there was plenty, and everyone there was fed.
There was so much that was edible;
The feasting was incredible,
And so much left over that the people said:
"As we share what we have with each other,
Let us sing out joyfully.
May abundance lead to gratitude,
Then to generosity."

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Composer Note: In this timeless story the mysterious source of the bounteous food is never named. Do the overflowing baskets come from a divine source after the wise man expresses gratitude? Or is there another possible source, more human but no less miraculous? It was important to me that my retelling ask this question, but not answer it.

Also, writing the lyrics of this song was a blast! Some of my rejected lyrics were just as funny as the ones I kept. For example, here are some of my alternate versions for the third and fourth lines of verse 2:

While the shortfall was explainable, a feast was unattainable.
This was all that was available. The amount was hardly scalable!
The amount was truly comical. It was hardly economical!
The amount was truly laughable, but the wise man still stayed affable.
The amount was quite forgettable. What a shortfall! How regrettable!

These couplets still crack me up, but in the end I had to go with lyrics that told the story best. - E.A.