

## Enough For Everyone

Texts: Genesis 32:22-34

Romans 9:1-5 (Series A, 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost) Ps. 17:1-7,15

Matthew 14:13-21

Let us pray:

Once upon a time there were three mice who died and went to heaven. After a couple of days, St. Peter stopped by and asked them how they liked being in heaven. The mice said that it was OK, but since they have such short legs, it was hard for them to get around because heaven was so big. So St. Peter told them that he would be able to help them. After a little while, an angel came to the mice and gave each of them a set of roller skates. Right away, the mice put the roller skates on, and they could zip around heaven, really enjoying themselves.

A little later, a certain cat died and went to heaven. After a couple of days, St. Peter stopped by and asked the cat how he liked being in heaven. The cat answered by saying with a big smile, "Oh, boy, do I like being in heaven! I'm having a great time and I'm really enjoying myself. And most of all, I love those meals on wheels."

Our Gospel speaks of Jesus multiplying the loaves and fishes for the some 5000 plus people on the hillside. The lesson being portrayed here is not about the disciples serving the crowds or the boy willing to share his meal, or even the fact that Jesus performed a miracle here.

The main fact is that Jesus shows mercy, has compassion on the crowd. And he wants us to act just as he did, *compassionately, mercifully*. We see this kind of thing many times during Jesus' ministry. Others can only see the difficulty of the situation; Jesus can only see human need.

On the other hand, there are those who say that there was no miracle involved here at all, but that the people in the crowd all had brought lunches with them in their backpacks. So, when they saw the disciples passing out those meager five loaves and fishes, they brought out their lunches and begun to eat.

Now let us go back to the story it is obvious that disciples' reaction to the crowd was one of anxiety. **"Every tomorrow has two handles,"** Whenever we are confronted with a situation "We can either take hold of it with the *handle of anxiety* or the *handle of faith*."

Jesus approached the problem with the handle of faith. When others can only see the difficulty of the situation; Jesus can only see human need and acts with compassion.

Once Jesus started to act confidently, telling the disciples to start handing out the five loaves and two sardines (fish), the disciples, and it seems everyone else, caught the spirit and started to pitch in to help one another.

I'm sure Jesus didn't refuse anyone in that crowd from eating, he didn't exclude anyone, different races that were there, the good, the bad and the ugly. Unfortunately, some Christian denominations are not permitted to give Holy Communion to non-members of that particular denominations.

I don't think the *mercy* and *compassion* Jesus shows in this gospel would approve of such a stand-offish practice as refusing Communion to someone who brother or sister in Christ.

Many years ago, I was speaking at a Lutheran Church in Edmonton Alberta. After the worship service a middle age woman approached me as I was greeting the audience with a strong German accent, she said great sermon Herr pastor and talk to you later.

So, during refreshment time, we sat in a corner with the neighbour who invited her to the evening service. She proceeded to tell me why she hasn't in Church in decades until this evening, and thanks to her neighbour.

It all happened after the second world war there was great scarcity of food in Germany as a little girl, she and siblings approached a Convent in the village in search for food. She knocked on this massive wooden gate, and after a while, a nun opened the slit in the gate.

She told the nun they are hungry and they needed some food, the nun asked her are you a catholic, she responded no, good bye and closed the shut. The question that confronts us this morning is that what would Jesus do in such situation? And what would you and I do in such situation?

More astounding than Jesus' feeding of the crowds with a few pieces of bread and fish is Jesus' transforming the crowd into a community, a community united in their need for one another, in the bread they share, in the love of Christ who has brought them together.

Christ empowers each one of us to perform our own miracles of creating community when we "move the fences" to include outsiders, when we welcome the rejected, sick and forgotten to our tables, when we give of what little we have, joyfully and gratefully, for the sake of others, when we welcome one another as we would welcome Jesus. After all, we are of one family – created in the image of God.

Jesus makes do with what is at hand, like the bread and the sardines. Blessed and broken, touched by the power of God, it is these specific loaves which are now able to feed the multitude.

Jesus doesn't need to clone more loaves; rather, in breaking open the bread he brings forth as no one else could the *possibilities* and *capabilities* hidden in the depths of what is already there.

And so, he does with us as well. He **breaks** us open so that we have the capacity to be, and to do, far more than we otherwise could. He **transforms** us by making us more fully ourselves, by revealing that identity of which we ourselves are not fully aware, the unique, way in which each of us is called to the image of God.

There is another part of this story that I want to mention in closing. God can use small things to do great things. Take that small boy's lunch. Not much really amongst so many. Five small barley loaves and two small fish - and I emphasise the word "**small**" here.

And yet in spite of the smallness of what Jesus had to work with, look what happened - over 5,000 people were fed. In the hands of the Lord, ***a little is always more than enough.*** Don't ever underestimate what is your hands.

- We may feel we have very little to offer Jesus.
- We may think that we have few talents and abilities for service to others.
- We may feel that the amount of time that we can spend with people who need help and encouragement is so small.
- We feel discouraged because the efforts we have made have brought so little results.
- We feel that the love we have shown has been anything but adequate.
- We may think that our contribution to our school and church is hardly worth mentioning.

But we know, Jesus can take small things and make them into something significant and worthwhile. He can take your words, my words, and your actions, my action no matter insignificant we may think they are, and use them to make a powerful and positive effect in someone's life.

Don't think that your act of kindness is too small and insignificant to affect anyone, your smile, your attitude, your help or whatever. In the hands of the Master, they are transformed. If he can use five small barley loaves and two small fish and feed over 5,000 people, surely he can use our simple acts and words to do wonderful things for others and for the glory of God.

St. Paul puts it this way: ***"My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus the Lord"*** (Phil. 4: 19). Since this is so, we are to go out to the poor in the mercy and compassion of Jesus and help supply every need of theirs. There is always enough to go around. **Amen.**

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