

Sermon: More Than Enough

8/2/2020

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

When Jesus got on the boat at the beginning of today's Gospel lesson, he did not set off to perform a miracle. No, he had just been told that his close friend and relative, John the Baptist, had been killed, so he left in search of a deserted place. He wanted time alone to grieve, something that I'm sure we've all wanted after the death of a loved one. Except that when he went ashore, instead of finding peace and quiet, he saw a great crowd. For a brief moment, I imagine, he was tempted to turn around and sail away, until he found the deserted place he so longed for. But then he looked at the faces in the crowd and as he did so he felt compassion.

You see, the people gathered that day were hungry, and not just for their daily bread. They were hungry for a sign of hope. They had been ground down by years of Roman oppression and longed for the day when their Messiah would finally come. Jesus felt compassion because he recognized their pain and struggles, just like he recognizes ours gathered here today. So he went from person to person, healing those who were sick, until darkness began to descend. "The day is nearly over," the disciples came and said to him. "Send the crowd away so that they may

go and buy some food in the nearby villages. The markets will soon close for the night. Let's be done for today and see what tomorrow may bring."

It was a reasonable request and one that we would have likely made as well. So imagine their surprise when Jesus turned to them and told them, "No. There is no need for the crowd to go away. You give them something to eat." At this point, I imagine that the disciples' minds were racing. They only had five loaves and two fish, barely enough to feed themselves, let alone the crowd. How could they ever feed so many? What if Jesus came to you, right here and right now, and told you that you needed to feed every person living in St. Helens? That is the challenge that the disciples were facing as they gazed out onto the crowd. How could they feed so many with so little?

We've all had times when it feels like Jesus is asking more of us than we have to give. Back in college, I was working a summer job when my boss brought me into her office. Another co-worker, who was black, had accused me of calling him racist names. Names that I had never even heard of and had no idea what they meant. Names which I have not and never will call another person. Each time that I hear Jesus' call to love my enemies and pray for those who persecute me, I think back to that day. I honestly have no idea why he accused me of saying such hurtful things, and still struggle to think and talk about it. Yet, I am called to love him and pray for him, and there are some days that feel like I do. There are some days when

I feel like I have forgiven him and the pain has gone away. There are other days where it feels like all I have to give are five loaves and two fish, not nearly enough.

That day, the disciples took to Jesus what little they had, and he did not respond by criticizing them. He did not ask why they only had five loaves and two fish. Rather, he took the loaves and the fish, looked up to heaven, and transformed them into something more. He helped the disciples do what they could not on their own. Without Jesus, they could not have fed the crowd, let alone have twelve baskets of food left over. Jesus performed the miracle so that the crowd might be fed and so that his disciples, and us gathered here today, might learn two important things: one about God and one about discipleship.

Through the miracle, we hear that our God is not a God of scarcity, but of abundance. Each of us has been called to bring to God what we have. It may not be much, but to God it is more than enough. God can take what we have, no matter how small, and transform it into something more. God can make five loaves and two fish into so much food that it not only feeds and fills the crowd, but fills twelve baskets beyond. God can take what love and forgiveness I have for the man who accused me of saying such hurtful things and make it into something more. God can make it into more than enough, because that's who God is. God, as we heard in our Old Testament lesson, is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love, good to all, upholds those who are falling, and satisfies the desire of every

living thing. God longs to take and transform what we have into more than enough, and not because we deserve it, but because that's who God is. When Jesus blessed and multiplied the loaves and fish that day, he did not do so because of the faith of the disciples or the crowd. Remember, the disciples did not see how they could do what Jesus was asking, and given how many people were there, likely somewhere between 10 and 20 thousand, there were almost certainly those among the crowd who did not know or see what Jesus was doing. No, Jesus fed them because when he looked out, he saw that they were hungry, hungry for food and hungry for the good news, and had compassion.

Through the miracle, we hear of the abundance of God. We also hear how God is calling us as disciples to take part in that abundance. Jesus could have acted alone. He could have gathered the loaves and fish, multiplied them, and distributed them without the disciples' help, but that is not what he wanted. Instead, he asked the disciples to bring to him what they had. He took what they had to offer, blessed it, broke it, and gave it back to them, so that they could give it to the crowd. Each of us has been called to be involved in the work that God is doing. Each of us has been called to bring to God what we have, so that God might bless it and so that through it God might bless those around us. We see and meet people every day who are hungering, hungering for food and for the good news. That day, out of God's abundance the disciples had more than enough to give, and if we trust in

God, whether we have a lot or just a little, we will have more than enough to give as well. Let it be so. Amen.