**Enough for All**

**GBC – Feeding of 5,000**

**Lent 3**

**March 4, 2018**

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**1st Reading: 1 Corinthians 1: 18-25**

(Parallel Gospel story: [John 6:1-14](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=John+6:1%E2%80%9314:1&version=nrsv))

After these things and because he knew that the Pharisees sought ways that they might seize and kill him, Yeshua went out of the land of Yehuda to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is also called the Sea of Tiberius. A great multitude followed him because they saw his signs that he did on those who were sick. Yeshua went up into the mountain and he sat there with his disciples. Now the feast of the Pesach was at hand.

Yeshua therefore, seeing that a great multitude was coming to him, said to Phillip, “Where are we to buy bread that these may eat?”

This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Phillip answered him, “Two hundred denarii’s worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that everyone of them may receive even a little.”

Now there was much grass in that place. Yeshua said to him, “Have people sit down.” So the people sat down, and Yeshua said to the disciples, “Go amongst the people and collect all the food that they will give you and bring it to me.”

The disciples were filled with doubt that the multitude would do as they asked, but they said nothing and did as he said. When they collected al the food that was given to them, they brought it to Yeshua who, raising his right hand, blessed it and, having given thanks, he distributed it to the disciples and instructed them to divine it equally among the multitude.

When they were filled, he said to his disciples, “Gather up the broken pieces which are left over that nothing be lost.”

So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces that were left over by those who had eaten. They were amazed and questioned Yeshua about what had occurred. He answered them saying, “Only from the truth I tell you, when more than one are gathered together in the Spirit’s name, then the Spirit is with them. And when the Spirit is with them, then there is always enough for all.”

When therefore the people saw the sign that Yeshua did, they said, “This is truly a great prophet who has come into the world.”

*The Gospel of the Beloved Companion, Jehanne de Quillan (pg. 31-32)*

I would like to begin with a kind of story/poem called

“Just a Housewife by Cordelia Baker-Pearce from *Celebrating Women*

“I packed five cakes of bread and two small fishes.

Sent him off, my youngest lad,

To take his father’s dinner to the field.

Came back alone, he did, all goggle-eyed.

My fresh-baked bread that boy gave away!

To some young travelling preacher out of Galilee

He said it fed 5,000 people! What a tale!

It can’t be true – but if it is –

What kind of dough did these hands knead this morning? “

What kind indeed!

Was it magical dough – kneaded and baked by a loving mother?

Was it the presence of Jesus himself as miracle worker that caused 5,000 to be fed?

Or was it something else – something in between?

No matter where we start, we end up at the same place – a community was fed, and more than that, likely nourished – because of something unique that took place. We could say that an entire community was ‘lifted up’ – lifted up by love – because someone shared what bread they had, what resources they were given.

That is our theme for Lent – “Lifted Up By Love” and last week we were reminded that Jesus invites each of us to participate in lifting others up – Jesus invites us to come to the banquet – and then participate in bringing that kingdom of love and transformation to others through actions of justice.

Today – we have another kind of invitation. Jesus again invites us in this story, but in the Gospel of the Beloved Companion, this story is told in a slightly different way.

Just a word about that if you are just joining us. We have been using the Gospel of the Beloved Companion (GBC) in Lent. I have had the text itself printed these last two weeks so you can see for yourselves how similar it is to our other gospel accounts. I would still encourage you to purchase your own copy so you can read it for yourselves because I believe it can be life-giving. To me it compliments the other four gospels we already have.

When you think about it, the four gospels we already have are not exactly alike. Obviously if they were, we would not need all four in the cannon of the Bible – but they all compliment each other and sometimes even contradict each other. When we take them all as a whole, we get a fuller picture of the life and teachings of Jesus.

I believe the GBC can be added to supplement what we already have in a similar way. This reminds me of an exercise I do with my confirmation classes. I ask one person to sit in the middle of the room, and then the rest of the members of the class sit around that person, and I ask them all to draw that person, from the view of where they are sitting. When we are finished, each picture looks slightly different. One is of the back and one is of the front, one is of the side. One artist chose to include some detail while another did not. Terry Chan was in the center a two years ago and a few months ago it was Tad. I then ask the class, “Is this all still Terry? Or Tad?” – Yes, is the reply.

“Then why don’t all the pictures look the same?”

“Because we were drawing from our own angle.”

“Exactly!”

As were the gospel writers – drawing from their own angle/vantage point to their particular audiences.

When we look at the GBC that way, we can see it is one more angle, one more vantage point one more perspective.

Which leads us back to the Gospel itself.

In all four gospels – one person basically offers some sort of food and then Jesus blesses it and it multiplies. In Matthew, Mark and Luke, it is the disciples who give Jesus three loaves and two fish. In John, it is a little boy. In all of these Gospels, it places the emphasis on Jesus as the miracle worker.

When we look at the GBC telling of the feeding of the multitudes, what is different about this telling? (*I asked the congregation to respond, and they figured it out*)

Exactly!

Here – Jesus says, **“Go amongst the people and collect al the food that they will give you and bring it to me.”** And then “The disciples were filled with doubt that the multitude would do as they asked, but they said nothing and did as he said.”

Here it is **all** the people – the entire community giving a little of what they have. I can imagine many of them must have wondered what good what they had with them would really do. Were some of them reluctant to part with it? Because if they did then they might not have any left? That would be natural – but for whatever reason, maybe because there was a spirit of generosity and love there, they did as was asked. AND THEN – with the blessing of the Spirit – it multiplied.

And then we have this other great line from this passage:

“When more than one is gathered together in the Spirit’s name, then the Spirit is with them, and when the Spirit is with them, then there is always enough for all.”

There is always enough for all – spiritually, physically, and emotionally.

Something about the presence of God’s spirit takes what we have and multiplies it – so what we give is more than just the sum of its parts.

Doing this – sharing what we have and thinking of the whole community rather than just our own individual needs, is something that we know is part of the message of Jesus – but it is often counter cultural. The passage we have from Corinthians today highlights that. To the world, the way of Jesus is foolish. The message of the cross, of letting go, of surrendering the small self (ego) to benefit the whole – that goes against the grain of society, which (through various marketing campaigns and other means) encourages us to be just out for ourselves, to protect what we have. To the larger society the message of Jesus may seem ‘weak’ or puzzling at the very least. I can even see this mindset playing into the conversation about gun control – where holding on to one’s second amendment rights is seen to be more important than the safety of the community. In this conversation for some, it seems that making sure everyone has access to an assault rife if they want one, because it is their right, is more important than the impact of what that kind rifle might do if it gets into the wrong hands, as has been the case in so many mass shootings in recent years.

The way of Jesus invites us to let go of thinking only of ourselves and think of the whole community. With this example (of the conversation about gun control) we can see that this way of being may seem ‘foolish’ to the values of ‘the world’ but it also has many implications to society as a whole. Something this congregation understands very well.

Sometimes, even when we know this, the thing that gets in our way is thinking that what we have to offer is not enough, couldn’t possibly help all those in need.

I like the story of the boy offering what he has in the story of the feeding of the five thousand in the Gospel of John, because it shows his innocence. He did not realize it would not be enough. He had no sense of scarcity yet – he just wanted to share.

What if what actually happened in the story was some combination of John and the Gospel of the Beloved Companion? What if other people saw the boy bringing forward what he had and offering it even though it was small, and then others saw his example and said, “Well, if he offered that, then surely I have some olives!” And someone else said, “I brought along some cheese and a bit of bread!” And because everybody shared what little they had, eventually, when it all came together, it was enough.

I think of the number of ‘Go Fund Me’ campaigns where large sums of money have been raised via the internet all because lots of people were giving $5, 25 or $50.00 donations. Or our Stop Hunger Now program – where we each package these small bags of dried food – and each one may not seem like much but by the end of the 90 min of packing, we have made 10,000 meals! Sometimes a little goes a long way.

So how can we rethink what we have to offer – that in God’s hands it may be enough?

It may be that we are good at something in particular and it is a skill that brings us joy but we don't’ really think it would be of much use. But maybe even that small thing could be used for change.

There was an interesting article in this week’s Sojourner magazine.

It is written by Kathy Khang, Korean American, who co –authored a book called “More than Serving Tea” – about being a Christian, Asian American woman.

She writes, “My medium of choice is usually words. My activism often takes the shape of a column, sermon or talk, a march or protest, lobbying representatives and attending meetings. But recently, I took on activism with a needle and went back to a hobby of mine to bring my words to life: cross-stitching’.

Through the miracle of social media, I was connected to Alicia Watkins, who offers back-stitched pithy sayings through her Etsy shop. Watkins and I are not alone. Shannon Downey of Chicago calls the activity ‘craftivism’ and through it she raised $5,000 in November to combat gun violence.”

$5,000 from selling these little framed needlepoint, cross stich wall hangings like this one (that says ‘Nevertheless, she persisted’). That is kind of amazing!

Cross stich is not something we think of as activism, and yet here it was used for that purpose. It reminds me of the time PW put out a call to knit dolls for orphans in Africa and Harriet knit like, 100 dolls?

This reminds me of the message of this passage. We all have a talent – we all have something to share. It might not seem like much, but in God’s hands it can multiply to be something that can give life and bless many. Our job is not to judge what gift we may have, not to say ‘Oh, what good is THAT? I wish I had that gift over there!” – but to follow the lead of the little boy in John’s gospel and say – well, here is this!

So when you think about what you love to do – what you are good at – which is part of God’s gift – what comes to mind?

It might be that you are good at fixing things, or good at building things. It might be that you are good at tech or understand social media well. Maybe you are really good at organizing people for social gatherings like a dinner or a party. Maybe you enjoy cooking or have the gift of hospitality. Maybe you play a musical instrument not many people know about or really like to sing. Maybe you are good at crafts and also willing to teach others how to do a craft or bead work. Maybe you are good at teaching in general. These are just a few examples, but there may be many more!

I invite you to think about that question – and really ponder it for a moment.

Without thinking about how it might be used, what is a gift you have? Something that brings you joy that you joy or a passion you have?

I am going to invite you to take a moment and write it on your index card

And then during communion when you come forward, also drop your card in the basket as a way of offering it to God. If you are also wiling to put your name on it that would be great – and then if the need or idea does arise, we can say ‘hey! This person is good at that! Let’s ask them!”

In all these things may we remember the words of Jesus, ‘When more than one are gathered together in the Spirit’s name, then the Spirit is with them. And when the Spirit is with them, then there is always enough for all.”

May God’s Spirit continue to be with us this day, Amen.