



Lectionary 18, Year A

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10th Sunday after Pentecost: Gospel Text - Matthew 14:13-21

Matthew 14:13-21

¹³ Now when Jesus heard [about the beheading of John the Baptist,] he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. ¹⁵ When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." ¹⁶ Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." ¹⁷ They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." ¹⁸ And he said, "Bring them here to me." ¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰ And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

SERMON TEXT:

Hello! I'm Deacon Jenny Frantz and I serve in the Northeastern Ohio Synod office as the Director of Communication and Formation. I bring you greetings on behalf of Bishop Laura Barbins and the rest of the Northeastern Ohio Synod staff. We are grateful for your partnership in ministry and for your sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ in your community!

As I was pondering our Gospel story for today, I was honestly, **mostly** thinking about bread.

I love good bread. Warm, crusty, just out of the oven. Add some melty butter and I am completely in. When it is really good, I do not even realize it, but I start doing this little happy dance. It just kind of happens.

I don't think my spouse understood it, my love for bread. It felt like a bit much. Until one night, we were at a restaurant that served this delicious, fresh from the oven, focaccia bread. Still warm. Salty and crusty on top. A few different kinds of butter on the side. We took a few bites, and suddenly we were both quiet. Just smiling. And then I looked over, and he was doing the same thing. The same little happy dance.

There was nothing complicated about it. Just bread. Flour and water and time. But somehow it pulled us into the moment. We stopped thinking about everything else. We paid attention. We received what was right in front of us.

And I have been wondering... how often does something like that happen, and I miss it? How often is something simple, something ordinary, already enough... and I am too distracted, or too rushed, or too convinced that it cannot possibly be enough to even notice?

That is where I want to enter our Gospel story. **We see scarcity.**

Jesus has tried to depart from the crowds to have a moment to himself, but they followed him. Rather than turn to frustration or anger, Jesus has compassion on them. He cures their sick. The day turns to evening and the disciples notice a problem.

It is getting late. They are in a deserted place. There are too many people and not enough food. So they do the math. And the math is not wrong.

Five loaves. Two fish.
Thousands of people.

And they come to a very reasonable conclusion:
Send them away. Let them go find food somewhere else. Let them take care of themselves. This is beyond what we can do. **There simply isn't enough.**

That instinct makes sense. It is practical. It is efficient.
And it is exactly how we tend to move through the world.

We look at what we have. We measure it against what is needed.
And we decide what is possible.

Is there enough time? Enough energy? Enough resources?
Enough capacity?

If not, we send people away.

Maybe not with direct words, but in quieter ways.

We avoid the conversation because it feels like too much.

We see a need and assume someone else will handle it.

We offer something polite instead of something real.

We tell ourselves, "This is not mine to carry."

We see scarcity.

It teaches us to believe that what we have is too small. What we have is not enough to matter. And underneath all of that is fear. If I give what I have... will there be enough left for me?

That is the world the disciples are living in. And Jesus does not argue with their numbers. He does not say, "Actually, you have more than you think." He says something much more unsettling to them.

"You give them something to eat."

He puts the need right back in their hands. And they respond honestly. "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish."

Which is another way of saying: But it is not enough!

And then Jesus says, "Bring them to me."

Jesus sees possibility.

So they bring what they have. Not what they *wish* they had. Not what would make this easier or more impressive. They bring what is already in their hands.

And Jesus takes it, he looks up, he blesses it, he breaks it, and he gives it back to them.

So the disciples begin to distribute it and somehow, as it is given away, it does not run out. Everyone eats. Everyone is filled. And there are twelve baskets left over.

But this is not just a story about food...

It reminds us how Christ works.

Christ takes what is small, ordinary, and seemingly not enough... and he makes it a place where God's abundance shows up.

Nothing new is added before the blessing, this miracle begins with what they already have.

And that matters.

Because it means the question is not, "Do we have enough?" The question is, "Will we trust what Christ can do with what is already in our hands?"

This is where that love of bread connects for me.

Bread is simple. It is ordinary. And still, it has this way of making you stop and notice. It pulls you into the present moment.

And in scripture, again and again, bread becomes the place where God is revealed.

A crowd in a field.

Disciples at a table.

Two travelers on the road who only recognize Jesus when he takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it.

Recognition happens in the breaking. Presence is revealed in what looks ordinary.

And here, in this field, the crowd comes hungry. And they leave having been fed by the presence of Christ.

But notice this... They are fed through the hands of the disciples.

Yes, Jesus blesses and breaks the bread, but then he gives it to the disciples to pass it out to the crowd. The disciples are not bystanders watching a miracle happen. They are IN it. Passing out bread and watching it multiply.

I wonder at what point they realized they would have enough? When did they begin to notice that the bread was somehow becoming MORE?

Jesus calls the disciples beyond their scarcity mindset to look deeper. He asks them to work through their discomfort. Jesus said: "You give them something to eat."

And Jesus calls us to do the same. It can feel really uncomfortable. We would rather have more certainty. Maybe we wish we had more to offer.

But that's not how this works.

The disciples did not suddenly have more bread. They simply placed what they had into the hands of Christ... and then they kept showing up as it was given away.

So maybe the question is not, "Do I have enough?"
Maybe the question is, "Am I willing to place what I have into God's hands... and trust what God will do with it?"

Because the truth is, Christ is already at work with what we have.
We just don't always see it.

What we have may feel too small, it may feel too ordinary, it may not feel like it will make much difference.
But neither did five loaves and two fish.
And still... that is where Jesus began.

So what do you have to offer?
A conversation? Time? A meal you could share? Attention you could give to someone who feels unseen?

You don't have to do everything all at once, just something.
And then... trust that God is still doing what God has always done. God takes the simple things we offer and makes it a place where God's abundance shows up. Where Christ's presence becomes known.

We see scarcity.
Jesus sees possibility.
Jesus invites us to participate.

And in that participation... we begin to recognize him.
Sometimes in something as simple as bread.

Amen.

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