

Sermon August 2nd 2020

God Uses What We Bring to the Table

Living in the midst of the biggest economic downturn in our lifetimes our worries and anxiety of not having enough are heightened. Will I have enough money to pay my bills? How much more money can I borrow? Where can I access food, shelter, clothing? How will this economic downturn impact my children, grandchildren, great grandchildren?

Living in the midst of this pandemic our fears are heightened, as we worry about our health and safety.

Many of us are finding it very difficult to live trusting that God will keep us safe, and provide for our needs. We try, but sometimes our anxieties and fears get the best of us. We have good days where we can see God's care and love, and then we have days where we hear Jesus whispering in our ears, "Oh you of little faith."

In our gospel this morning, Jesus hears about John the Baptist's death, and so, needs to get away to grieve. When Jesus thinks he has come to a deserted place he sees a large group of people anxious and scared. In need of healing. In need of feeling safe. In need of food.

Many of the people in the crowd are living in poverty. Mistreated by the Empire due to their gender or their age or their ethnicity or their physical and mental ailments or their religion. In the region of Galilee, fish and bread were the basic diet of people living in poverty. The fact that the only food the disciples could gather up were fish and bread tell us something about the people who followed him.

When the disciples see it is getting late, and see how little they have to offer they ask Jesus to send the crowds away to find food for themselves. Of course, with many of them living in poverty, there was no certainty that they would have the means to get food. So, Jesus tells the disciples to feed them.

In this moment we can really relate to the disciples, as they react with fear and anxiety towards Jesus' request. Focusing too much so on the limited resources before them. In response, Jesus doesn't say "Oh you of little faith," like he does in other stories where the disciples doubt his power.

Instead, Jesus says bring what you have to me. Jesus blesses the food, and tells them to share these baskets of food with all the others.

What we see in this story is Jesus taking what we have and meeting the needs of all the people. The disciples anxiety and fears of not having enough are relieved once again. At least for the moment.

This is the only miracle story that is mentioned in all four gospels, which may be telling to the importance of this story. It addresses a universal concern we all experience living in a world that is broken. Fear and anxiety of not having enough. Of not being able to stay healthy and safe.

Unfortunately, these fears and anxieties impact our ability to follow Jesus. To live faithfully, believing that God will provide us with the resources we need to continue to be Jesus' hands and feet in the midst of an oppressive Empire or an oppressive pandemic. To live faithfully, believing that God will keep us safe, and provide for our needs.

So, Jesus performs this miracle that catches the eyes of all four gospel writers. Catches the eyes of the disciples. Catches the eyes of you and I. And what we see as we sit on the beaches of our lives longing to be relieved from our anxiety and fear is Jesus standing there with us. Showing us over and over again, that what we are able to bring to the table will be enough for Jesus to do miraculous things with. That in the little we have Jesus can create enough to meet all our needs.

Whether it is our need for food or our need for enough money to pay our bills. I am amazed at how well we continue to support the church during this financial uncertain time. Whether it is our need to worship in a new and creative way or our need to be the church in our community during this pandemic time. Look how much we raised during our Easter hamper ministry. Or the people who have shared their technological gifts with us, so we can continue to minister through worship online. Or the gift of zoom that has allowed us to continue gathering for study of the scripture and has created opportunities where we can find support in one another like our coffee hour on Sunday mornings. Whether it is our need to feel validated in the gifts God has given us or our need to speak out against injustice. Whatever our needs are, Jesus shows us throughout his ministry that God will provide us with the resources we need.

This is the good news Jesus brings to our lives during this anxious and fearful time in our world. That God is still with us, providing for our needs. That God is still with us, healing us from our suffering. That God is still with us, giving us hope for a better future. That God is still with us, encouraging us to put our trust in a savior who stands on the beaches of our lives with us, in the midst of his grief over our brokenness, giving us what we need to feel renewed. To continue being Jesus' hands and feet in our pandemic and broken world.

Let us pray, generous God, we are walking through some anxious and fearful times. Open our eyes to see where you are at work providing for our needs. Grant us a trusting heart that leans on you during these uncertain times. Give us faith to believe that you indeed can and will do miraculous things with what we are able to bring to your table. **Amen.**

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