

Will there Be Enough?
August 12, 2007
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(Luke 9:11-17 NRSV) When the crowds found out about it, they followed him; and he welcomed them, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured. {12} The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place." {13} But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish--unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." {14} For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each." {15} They did so and made them all sit down. {16} And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. {17} And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

I think that there are certain stories in the New Testament that really tell us about what the Jesus movement is all about. Stories such as, the prodigal son, or the good Samaritan come to mind — and so does our story today.

This is one of those stories that clearly tell us what the Jesus movement is all about.

I want to tell you the story again this morning because it is so important.

The Disciples had been out and about the Galilee — teaching and preaching and doing all kinds of amazing things. And they had come back to tell Jesus all about their adventures. The local people, too, had heard about the disciple's great adventures and had heard about Jesus, so they began to follow him as he headed to the north side of Galilee lake.

It was getting late in the day, and the disciples — who had just come back from their amazing adventures — got worried because of the large crowds. They were afraid that their might be a riot. So they said to Jesus.

"Jesus, send these people home, because it is getting late in the day, and they are all hungry. They need to go home and make supper for their families — or at least tell them to go to Bethsaida

or Capernaum so that they can find a place to eat and sleep.”

Jesus response was curt and simple — “You give them something to eat.”

Come on Jesus, have you forgotten where we are? We don’t have any money, and there isn’t any McDonald’s close by. How do you expect us to feed them all? If we scrounge our stuff together, all we have got is two fish and five loaves of bread. This crowd has got to be close to 10,000 when you count all the people.

Jesus told the disciples to have everyone sit down in groups — kinda like a huge family picnic. And then Jesus took the two fish and the five loaves of bread, and said a prayer of thanksgiving to God and began to pass out the food.

When all was said and done — and everyone had eaten their fill, there was still plenty of food left over.

In case you didn’t recognize that translation, that was the RSV (Revised Steve Version).

I said to you at the beginning, that this is an archetypal story of the Christian movement, because it tells us how we are to live in community.

Last week, Jeff talked about who we are gonna serve. And he quoted Jesus as telling us that we cannot serve both “God and the Bank.” We have to pick who is going to be #1 in our lives.

And while that sounds pretty easy — I think we all know the truth. Truly putting God #1 is much more difficult than we like to admit. Because for most of us, we don’t put God first, we put ourselves (or we may phrase it a little differently) our families first.

When we put ourselves, or our families first — we operate under a certain paradigm — we act a certain way.

When I (or my family) is #1

I count everything

Can I afford to do this?

Do I have enough time, or do I have a family obligation that is calling me?

WHAT IS THIS GOING TO COST ME,

And I ask myself “what will I get out of it?”

This story reminds us — that it is not about us.

This passage is classified as a “miracle”, and the miracle that takes place is that food suddenly appears — enough of it — to feed 5,000 men (plus women and children) and that there were 12 baskets full left over.

But that is not what happened.

Food did not suddenly drop out of the sky.

The miracle is that people shared!

And when they did — there was more than enough!

That is a hard lesson for most of us — because we are too consumed with making sure that we are taken care of.

Twenty-two years ago, I was the pastor of two small churches in rural North Carolina. They were wonderful, loving churches and were very generous to me. I was their “student” pastor, which meant that I would spend the week in Durham (110 miles to the east) and spend the weekends with them.

Four months after I arrived — Stewart (my youngest brother) was diagnosed with esophageal cancer.

Every month in which there were 5 Sundays, and there were 3 that year before he died — members of the congregation would come up to me and put money in my pockets and say “GO HOME”.

They knew that I didn’t have the money to get home, so out of their abundance, they shared.

Why the 5th Sunday thing? — well, I told you I served two churches and they alternated which one got church first and then Sunday School. If I remember, New Mt Tabor had church first on the 1st and 3rd Sundays, and Richfield had church first on the 2nd and 4th. Instead having to decide who would have church first on a fifth Sunday — they decided not to have worship — only Sunday School — so I had no real responsibility on a 5th Sunday. And in the south, more people go to Sunday School than they do to worship — Sunday School is the center of the Sunday morning experience.

And for me — it was a miracle!

A miracle — not because God magically made dollar bills appear in my pockets — No that wasn’t the miracle. The miracle was that these little congregations could love and care for me (a damn Yankee, no less) and share — share their love, and their resources so that I could spend some precious

time with Stewart and the rest of my family.

We do a lot of meals here at the church. And every time we do one, I struggle with the question — will we have enough?

Now I am not talking about having enough to eat. We always have more than enough — I am talking about having enough workers to pull it off.

And the miracle is — we do.

A couple weeks ago I wrote about another miracle that I have been privileged to be a part of. And I hope that you were a part of it too.

When Tim's friends put together the Spaghetti dinner last month, never in my wildest dreams did I think so many people would come out. And when we ran out of food, an amazing thing happened. Not only did Giovanni's provide more food — but the people in line WAITED. They didn't complain or bicker, they talked and cried and laughed with those around them. BECAUSE they knew, that they were part of something bigger than themselves.

SHARING — to be a Christian means that we learn to share.

That is why I believe that this is one of those stories in the New Testament that clearly help us see what this Christian movement is all about.

This morning we are celebrating the Baptism of Izzy Caddick, and I think that a baby is the perfect illustration.

We all have known parents who dote all over their children.

What happens when parents spoil their children — when it is all about the baby?

- ◆ they become selfish
- ◆ self-centered

The most difficult value that parents struggle with, in teaching their children, is to share. Our human nature is to grab, to hoard, to try and possess.

That is why stewardship is so important.

Sometimes I think that we lose sight of this and begin to think that we ask you for money so that we can pay the bills (Yes, of course that is important). But that is not why we do encourage stewardship.

We give, because it challenges our basic human instinct to hoard.

God wants us to learn how to share, and to trust each other that we will share in times of need.

If we cannot share out of our abundance — how will we ever learn to share out of our scarcity?

We have to teach each other to share.

And it is not easy to do.

But, when we learn to share — the thing that we find — is that there is more than enough — with 12 basket fulls left over!