

Knox/Trinity Summer Worship ~ 02 August 2020

~ **Sharing Joys and Concerns as we Gather** ~

~ **Welcome and Land Acknowledgement** ~

We gather in the name of Jesus from different communities of faith and from different places. Steve and I come to you this morning, worshiping on the unceded territory of the Lekwungen. The Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples continue in relationship with this land and we are mindful of their hospitality.

➤ *O let the power fall on me*

~ **Call to Worship** ~

Reader 1 This is a time for seeking – for seeking and then being found.

Reader 2 *As for me, O God, I will seek your face in sincerity and truth.*

Reader 1 This is a time for asking
– from One who knows our needs before we even speak.

Reader 2 *I shall be more satisfied, O God, to wake up to your likeness within me.*

Reader 1 This is a time for worship – to praise and meditate, sing and share.

Reader 2 Let us worship God as we gather in prayer...

~ **Prayer and Words of Hope** ~

When we begin our journey of faith, you are there, Constant Love – pointing the way to the promises you offer. When we stumble over our own silliness and skin our knees on the hardened pavement of our pride, you are there, Companion of the world's riff-raff – to take us by the hand – lift us to our feet – bandage our bleeding egos. And you continue to call us, Breath of life – to follow, even when our faith falters – to drink the living waters bottled with your grace – to serve those whom the world easily discounts – to see you waiting at the end of our pilgrimage. We seek to follow you always, O God, even as we come to you now in confession...

Merciful God, our Maker and our Judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed: we have not loved you with our whole heart – we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We repent and are sorry for all our sins. Forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life – through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

God is love. Through Christ our sins are forgiven. Let us take hold of this forgiveness and live always in the power of the Holy Spirit.

➤ ***Come, now is the time to worship***

~ Prayer ~

Open our hearts to your Word, O Lord, that we may gratefully receive your blessings – your energy – your spirit and your love as disciples for you. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen

~ Scripture ~

Matthew 14: 13-21

Now when Jesus heard this (*about the death 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.

When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.

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."

Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish."

And he said, "Bring them here to me."

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.

And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full.

And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

~ Message ~

This story tells about Jesus' ability to provide for the people's needs – our needs – spiritual, physical, human needs.

Jesus is tired and overwhelmed by the news of John the Baptist's tragic death. Grief can be exhausting. He seeks some quiet, restorative time in the wilderness. But when the crowds follow him, Jesus has compassion – he heals their sick – soothes their sadness – feeds their hunger. Anyone but the son of God might have ordered them to get lost, but Jesus is the one who cares for the people.

The food Jesus offers is simple basic fare, but it satisfies everyone gathered with some to spare. Jesus is the shepherd king who cares for his flock – who reminds them that just as manna was provided in the desert, just as Elisha fed over one hundred with only 20 barley loaves, just as God made available what was needed in ancient times, God continues to care for the people – continues to care for us.

It is also important that Jesus involves his disciples – tells them to give the people something to eat and later gives the food he has blessed to the disciples to share with the crowd – reminding them and us that all are called to be God's instruments in meeting the needs of others. In ancient times – in present times – and in times yet to come, active participation is required from all who pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" and who hope to see their prayer answered.

We see here in the Gospel of Matthew an indication to early and modern readers that God uses what we bring. The disciples despair of caring for the gathered crowd because they have nothing but five loaves and two fish. We too are prone to despair when faced with the daunting needs in our community and our world. This story reminds us that God uses the gifts we bring.

I wonder if it is a miracle story as it is often called or a message about social justice. Is it about Jesus inexplicably providing food for the hungry out of nothing or about those gathered sharing what they have tucked away? Do the disciples suggest that Jesus send the crowd away because they don't want the responsibility of feeding them – because they don't have confidence in Jesus ability to perform a miracle – or are they simply overwhelmed by the need they perceive in the gathered crowd?

Jesus feeds what amounts to a small town with five loaves and two fish – a meal that multiplies until no one can eat another bite and the leftovers fill twelve baskets. It is a miracle – and maybe that is enough, or should be – but for those of us who don't experience miracles all that often there are nagging questions...

How did it happen exactly? Did Jesus multiply the food all at once so that the disciples needed help distributing it among the crowd? Or did it happen as the loaves were being passed from person to person. When someone tore off a chunk of bread, did the loaf suddenly grow? Did new loaves appear before their very eyes or did they need to look away for it to happen?

The text says: 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. And all ate and were filled... It doesn't even really say the food was multiplied so maybe the miracle is that the people were satisfied – somehow – with that small amount. Strange and amazing for sure!

Maybe you know how the disciples feel in this story – that sense of being overwhelmed by the needs you see around you from day to day – the realization that you haven't nearly enough to even make a dent in the poverty of the world – or the resources to comfort the refugees – or the power to get the people to quit killing each other – or the political clout to intervene in all the places in our world where someone should really do something. Send them away Jesus – we can't cope with their hunger, their need.

The disciples were being realistic I suppose – operating out of a sense of their limited resources – out of a sense of scarcity. We do the same thing – we live on a "fixed income" you know. The thing is that Jesus doesn't see it the same way at all. Jesus looks at the same circumstance and operates out of a sense of plenty – abundance. Where the disciples see – where we see – not enough, Jesus sees plenty: plenty of time, plenty of food, plenty of possibilities with the resources at hand. **Jesus knew that wherever there was plenty of God there would be plenty of everything else.**

So, when Jesus blesses the limited food supply in front of the crowd – five loaves and two fish – he does so with confidence that God will turn not enough – our limitations – into plenty – profusion and bounty. It must have been something to see! Maybe that is where the miracle is – in the confident hope Jesus displays.

When Jesus stands in front of that great crowd and blesses the meagre meal, I wonder what the people sitting on the grass actually saw and what they were thinking. Maybe some near the front saw what was going on – thought it was crazy and were expecting the food to run out before it got past the third row of. Some must have laughed and started packing their belongings to head home. Others were likely mystified – how could this possibly work – or concerned – should Jesus really be promising so big with so little to deliver? Were they moved by his confidence?

I have a picture in my head of a small basket of food being passed around and then people starting to feel the weight of food hidden in their own pockets. You know they had some – a bit of lamb wrapped in a grape leaf, a few raisins, a chunk of bread left over from breakfast. You know some of them had tucked a little something away before heading off for the day. Wouldn't you? I would.

And as the basket of food is being passed around – just scraps really – everyone is so careful not to take too much – wanting Jesus' crazy idea to work – slipping their own bread into the basket – reaching in to take a piece and leaving even more behind so the meal grew and grew. And in the end the disciples are left to gather baskets of leftovers. Remnants that started off with five blessed and broken loaves.

Is that a miracle? Some would say no – just human beings being generous, sharing what they have – even when it's not much, even when it's not enough to go around, even from their "fixed income". That's not a miracle! That is simply a whole crowd of people moving from a sense of scarcity to a sense of plenty – overcoming their own fear of not having enough. Just people turning their pockets inside out for one another without worrying about what is in it for them. That's not a miracle! Or is it?

Miracles let us off the hook – they appeal to the part of us that is all too happy to let God feed the crowd – pay the bills – save the world – do it all. We say that what we have to offer isn't enough – not enough to make any difference at all, so we hold back and wait for a miracle. We sit in the crowd, waiting for God to act, hanging on to our own little loaves of bread. They are not much, we rationalize – they wouldn't go far. God will provide – let God provide and leave me out of it.

But Jesus does not leave us out of it. Jesus tells us we can't send the crowd away. Jesus tells us to give them something to eat. Jesus doesn't do it – he tells the disciples to do it. Not me but you – not my bread but yours – not sometime or somewhere else but right here – right now. Stop waiting for the problem to solve itself – magically, miraculously – and do something about it. However much you have, just bring it to Jesus and believe that it is enough to begin with – enough to get the ball rolling – enough to start a trend. Stop waiting for food to fall from the sky and share what you have. Stop waiting for a miracle happen and participate in one instead. **Amen**

➤ *Break now the bread of life*

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~ **Gathering at the Lord's Table** ~

Reader 1 *Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant...* [Isaiah 55: 1-3b]

Reader 2 **We remember that promise as we gather at this table where Jesus hosts – the one who came as a servant – washing disciples' feet, feeding them with living bread, loving them into new life. Come to this table all who hunger and thirst.**

Reader 1 **We remember with thanksgiving your gracious acts throughout history O God – you are the creator of all goodness and the source of abundance... In the beginning, your Spirit danced on the waters and brought us life. In your generosity, you created a garden of delights and nourishment – you called us to live with respect in creation and to care for one another.**

Reader 2 **You brought your people out of slavery into a land of milk and honey – flowing with streams of living water and planted with groves of olive trees. When we turned away from you – living in greed and violence – you sent us prophets to call us back and remind us to live for a day**

when no one would be hungry and we would live together in justice and peace.

Reader 1 We remember how Jesus called his followers to himself – how he told stories and taught us to pray. We thank you that he loved eating and drinking around tables where strangers became friends and where outcasts were included.

Reader 2 Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried, but you raised him from the dead – and like his disciples we meet him again in the breaking of bread as we gather around his table.

We remember and give you thanks, O God, that as he sat at the table with friends – sharing the fruit of the vine and the harvest of the fields – he took bread, blessed it, broke it and shared it, saying: *“Take – eat – this is my body which is for you. Do this to remember me.”*

When supper was over, he took a cup of wine and raised it, saying: *“This is God’s new covenant, made possible because of my death. Drink this all of you, to remember me.”*

Pour out your grace upon us, O God, and upon the simple gifts of this meal. Send your Spirit on us and on what we do here as we gather at the Lord’s Table to eat and drink of the living Word. May we be one in Christ and one with your vision of peace and plenty. In Christ, with Christ, through Christ – by the power of the Holy Spirit – all glory is yours, now and forever. Amen

~ Sharing Bread and Wine ~

The one who suffered for our injustices is now present for us in this bread.

The one whose body was hung on a cross is now offered for us again in this cup.

The bread of life – the cup of grace – we remember and share with thanksgiving these gifts in which God comes to us so that we may come to God.

After consuming the elements in your own space, please join in singing...

~ **Prayer** ~

Loving God, we offer thanks this day for the church – body of Christ, vessel of the Spirit, family of faith, witness in the world. Help us consider Jesus in all we do, letting our decisions be made as with his mind – our relationships formed as with his heart – our deeds done as with his hands. Encourage us to go where the Spirit moves us – individually and as communities of faith – opening ourselves to possibilities of service that you imagine for us and equip us to accomplish. Enable each one of us to be bold witnesses, for we know that the world needs good news and we sense in our spirits the importance of conveying your love to all.

Holy One, in gratitude for this meal – these people – we give ourselves to you. Take us out to live a changed people because we have shared the Living Bread and cannot remain the same. Ask much of us – expect much from us – enable much by us – encourage many through us. And may we live to your glory in all we do. Hear our prayer – words offered in gratitude and praise, confidence and trust, all in the name of Jesus. We join in singing our prayer as Jesus taught...

➤ ***Our Father in heaven*** (*The Lord's Prayer – no repeats*) **469**

~ **Blessing** ~

I pray that we may go into this week, directed by the timeless promises of God, renewed by the healing touch of Jesus Christ and energized by the creative power of the Holy Spirit. And may the grace of the risen Lord, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Holy Spirit embrace us all.

➤ ***May the God of hope go with us every day*** **726**

~ **Sharing Time as we Depart** ~