

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, August 6th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

God's Math
Proper 13
Matthew 14:13-21

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

All who thirst, come to the water.
Come, all who are weary;
come, all who yearn for forgiveness.
The Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ has washed over us,
and our gracious and holy God beckons and blesses us.
Drink deeply of these living waters.
Glory to you, O Lord, glory to you.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O God, you are infinite,
eternal and unchangeable,
glorious in holiness,
full of love and compassion,
abundant in grace and truth.
Your works everywhere praise you,
and your glory is revealed
in Jesus Christ our Savior.
Therefore we praise you,
blessed and holy Trinity,
one God, forever and ever.
Amen.

Opening Hymn #389: "Breathe on Me, Breath of God" (V 1,2,3)

Breathe on me, breath of God;
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love
and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
 until my heart is pure,
 until with thee I will one will
 to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
 till I am wholly thine,
 until this earthly part of me
 glows with thy fire divine.

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
 Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**Eternal God,
 in whom we live and move and have our being,
 whose face is hidden from us by our sins,
 and whose mercy we forget in the blindness of our hearts:
 Cleanse us from all our offenses,
 and deliver us from proud thoughts and vain desires,
 that with reverent and humble hearts
 we may draw near to you,
 confessing our faults,
 confiding in your grace,
 and finding in you our refuge and our strength;
 through Jesus Christ your Son.**

Assurance of Pardon

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
 Your sins are pardoned.
 The penalty is paid.
 Thanks be to God.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

Responsive Reading**Isaiah 55:2-5**

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth;
for the LORD has spoken:

“Children have I reared and brought up,
but they have rebelled against me.

**3 The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master’s crib,
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand.”**

4 Ah, sinful nation,
a people laden with iniquity,
offspring of evildoers,
children who deal corruptly!
They have forsaken the LORD,
they have despised the Holy One of Israel,
they are utterly estranged.

**5 Why will you still be struck down?
Why will you continue to rebel?
The whole head is sick,
and the whole heart faint.**

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Is 1:2–5.**Children’s Hymn #378: “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning” (V 1,2,3)**

Jesus, Jesus,
Jesus in the morning, Jesus in the noontime;
Jesus, Jesus,
Jesus when the sun goes down!

Love him, love him,
Love him in the morning, love him in the noontime;
Love him, love him,
Love him when the sun goes down!

Serve him, serve him,
Serve him in the morning, serve him in the noontime;
Serve him, serve him,
Serve him when the sun goes down!

Children’s Lesson

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Matthew 14:13-21

¹³ Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate 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 on them and healed their sick. ¹⁵ Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." ¹⁶ But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." ¹⁷ They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." ¹⁸ And he said, "Bring them here to me." ¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰ And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Sermon

The feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle that is recorded by all four Gospel writers and thus it has some important lessons for Christians in their walk with God.

The first lesson we have is simple; Jesus cares about our needs.

Jesus had just learned of the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod. John was more than a prophet he was part of Jesus's family and someone who Jesus cared deeply about. So, when he learns of John's death soon after his preaching, teaching, and healing, he decides to withdraw away from the crowds to spend some time in mourning and in rest. Yet, the crowd follow him, while Jesus and His disciples are floating across the sea in their boat, the people are running along the shore so that they can be there when Jesus arrives.

When they arrive on the shore instead of finding solitude and a time of rest, they find thousands of people standing there, waiting to hear His preaching, His teaching and to receive His healing.

Look at what Jesus does. He could have cast out from shore in the boat again and kept floating along until the crowd gave up or he found a very secluded place. He could have told them all to go away, that he wanted to be alone, or that he was tired and needed some rest.

Yet, Jesus does nothing like this, he looks upon the crowd of people gathered and feels compassion for them. Instead of sending them away and getting the rest He needs, He looks at the crowds and sees the teachings they desire, the preaching they want to hear and the healing that they require. So, that is what Jesus does, he once again begins teaching, preaching, and healing.

This shows us the truth of who Jesus is, while many would have chosen to send the people away or to escape themselves, Jesus instead chooses to care for the people and their spiritual and physical needs right there without delay. Jesus cares about His people and is always there to look after them in their times of need, as long as they are willing to seek him out and place their trust in him.

The second lesson we are given in this scripture is that Jesus will sometimes ask the impossible of his followers.

When the disciples come to Jesus and ask him to send the people away so that they can buy food, Jesus says that they do not need to go away, instead he tells the disciples to give them something to eat. Jesus tells his disciples to do something that is impossible for them to do on their own. Their faith is being tested in a sense. You see the disciples thought that the problem they had in feeding the gathered crowd of people was one of the quantities of food it would take, but in truth the real test was in their faith in Jesus to provide what was needed if they turned to him the same way in which that crowd who chased him along the shore had.

Our faith as followers of Christ is constantly tested, some of those tests we fail, others we pass with a little help and still others we pass without even noticing the test. The intent of these tests is not to bring shame upon us, but instead to strengthen our faith and trust in God.

James 1:2-3 teaches us:

James 1:2-3

²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

The problems, trials, and tribulations we face in this life all test our faith. When we know and accept this then it becomes easier and easier to face these tests because we know that by enduring through them, we are growing closer in our relationship with God.

Today's Scriptures show us how we can face one of these tests of our faith. One of those times where God has called us to do something, and we just do not have enough of whatever the resource is that we need to complete the test. It could be food like in the

Scripture, or money, or manpower or any other resource. The Scripture teaches us that there are three ways in which people will face these trials, as a feeler, as a figurer or as one of the faithful.

Feelers are people who face the challenges they have enough life emotionally. You can recognize them because they will begin most of the discussion around any issue with 'I feel that...' or something similar. This is how the disciples begin to examine the issue in the parable, they are feelers. They look around at the large, gathered crowd, and begin to feel concerned and maybe a little bit panicked when they discover that they do not have enough food to feed themselves yet along this gathered group.

The problem with our feelings is that they can deceive us, the disciples look upon this crowd and their feelings first response is 'send them away'. When we follow just our feelings it is very easy for us to make mistakes and grand decisions that are not always in the best interests of those involved and very often not in the best interests of our faith. Feelings can mislead us quite easily.

Figurers are people who address the problems and trials in their lives using their minds. They are also quite easy to spot because they begin their sentences with 'I think...' Figurers are people who like to calculate, who figure things out with logic and reason. Figurers like to look at a problem, analyze it and come up with the best possible solutions.

If we look at this same miracle in the book of John, we are told:

John 6: 5-7

⁵ Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" ⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. ⁷ Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little."

Phillip had it all figured out in his mind. He looked at the gathered crowd, which was likely close to 15,000 including women and children, figures out the cost of feeding each one and how long it would take to come up with that money all in an instant.

And Phillip was absolutely correct, he had the right answer according to the math of this world. Human math says if you take something like five loaves and two fish and you try to divide that meager amount of food among 15 people it will be difficult, but among 15,000 it is impossible.

However, God's math works a little differently, it tells us that you need to take the five loaves and the two fish and multiply them by the power of God before you divide them among the people. And God's power is infinite.

So, while Phillip had the correct worldly answer, he had failed the test of faith.

Finally, we come to the faithful. The faithful are similar to the feeler and the figurer in that they too have a phrase that they like to start sentences with, it is usually something along the lines of 'I believe God can...'

Andrew was faithful on this day. Andrew finds a little boy who has those five loaves and those two fish. When you study the words used in this Scripture you discover they were not big French loaves like many assume, they were more like large crackers, and they were not two twenty-pound salmon but instead two small sardines. This was the lunch of a small boy not the meal of a hearty construction worker.

This little boy trusts in Jesus and hands over his meager lunch. He did not know what would happen, he did not know if Jesus himself would eat it and he would go hungry, or if something else would happen. He just placed his trust in the Lord and handed over all he had.

This is what true faith is, the willingness to hand things over into the hands of God, even when you cannot figure out what will happen, and you are not sure how you feel. The willingness to place all of your trust in God.

Can you imagine the look on that little boy's face as he witnesses this miracle? That little lunch that his mother had given to him that morning, feeding not only himself and a friend, but feeding five thousand men, and their wives and children.

That small meal fed everyone gathered and had leftovers. God provided in excess of what was needed. God is infinitely powerful and even with the smallest amount of faith and sacrifice he can do wonderful things through his power.

Jesus did four very simple things with the loaves and fish that he received from the boy.

1. He looked to Heaven.
2. He gave thanks.
3. He broke the bread.
4. He shared it with others.

When we have trials, tribulations, and problems in our lives we should be doing these same four things.

When we face any need in our lives we should be turning to God. There will be times when we are tempted to take on the world with our own meager resources, there may be times when we feel utterly defeated because we know we do not have enough to

survive or carry on through the trial. However, instead of looking at what we have we should be looking to God.

No matter what kind of problem or trial we face we should be looking to God for his Help. Many times, we feel overwhelmed in our lives because the marriage issue, or financial issue, or family issue or health issue seem like too much for us to handle, this is why we should be looking to God. When we are looking at just ourselves, we always recognize the math and the fact we do not have enough, we forget to multiply by the Power of God.

The next step Jesus took was to thank the father for what little they had. It was only a couple of crackers and two sardines, but Jesus thanked God for what he had provided. This is another human problem, we are often so focused on what we do not have that we are not thankful for the things we do have, especially in the first world nations. So, we should learn to be thankful everyday for the small blessings that God gives us in our lives.



In the 17th century, Dutch artist, Nicolaes Maes painted a picture entitled “Old Woman at Prayer.” It is a painting of a simple woman sitting alone at her table praying. On the table are half a loaf of bread and a small bowl of soup. You can tell from the surroundings that she is a poor, humble woman. Her rough hands reveal the evidence of many years of hard, manual labor.

Maes said that he was inspired to paint this after visiting this woman. She invited him to share in her meager meal. After the prayer, she looked up and with a smile said, ‘All this and Jesus, too.’

We all need to learn to be more like this woman thanking God for what we do have. We have all this and Jesus too!

After he had looked to heaven and given thanks, Jesus broke the bread. He broke it. It was in that very act of the breaking of the bread that God’s math began to take place. In the breaking God began to multiply what was given. This is so counter to the culture in which we live. In our culture we often overvalue things that are new and once something is broken it becomes valueless and disposable.

Yet in God’s kingdom things which are broken become immensely more valuable. The bread needed to be broken to be multiplied. The roof above Jesus and the disciples needed to be broken so that they body of a friend could be lowered into Jesus for his healing. The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ had to be broken so that our sins could be forgiven. Brokenness is necessary in our faith.

Psalm 51 says.

Psalm 51:17

**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

King David was a broken man and he turned to God often in his brokenness. We too need to recognize our own brokenness before we can truly come to Christ. There is an old hymn which is rarely sung anymore called the 'Spirit of the Living God' in which it says, 'Spirit of the Living God, Fall afresh on me. Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me.' This is what we should be asking God to do in our lives each and every day, to break us, melt us, mold us into his vessels and fill us with his Spirit.

Finally, Jesus shared the food with everyone gathered. Notice that Jesus and the disciples did not eat first and then share what was left with the others. Instead, they distributed the food among all of those gathered, ensuring that everyone had enough to eat before they ate themselves. Then once everyone was fed to their fullest and the remains were gathered there were twelve baskets full of fish and bread. I find that very interesting, that once the disciples learned to care for the gathered crowd first, they were provided with a basket of food each through God's math.

The lesson here is simple. If you are primarily concerned with meeting your own needs first, you will lead a miserable existence. However, if you learn to give and look after others first, you will begin to learn that your needs and problems do not seem quite as severe as you thought they were.

The call of Christianity is to make sacrifices of ourselves for the glory of God's kingdom. We do this through tithes to the church, donations to worthy causes, giving of our time, talent, and treasure. So, look at the ways in which you sacrifice to God's kingdom, are you tithing, helping out worthy causes, supporting with your time, talents, and treasures or are you more concerned with your own comfort first, are you feeling, figuring or faithful?

Look at the story of Moses, an old man, 80 years of age standing in front of a burning bush. God tells him to go to Pharaoh and demand that God's people be released. Moses offers every excuse he can think of, his age, his ability, his stutter. He tells God that he has nothing to offer, but God insists that Moses is the one.

To demonstrate this God turns Moses's staff into a serpent and Moses runs away from it, only for God to tell him to go back and pick it up. God showed Moses his Power that day, and Moses trusted in God and went to Pharaoh and demanded that God's people be let go.

Just a few months later when Moses was facing the impossible, an army in pursuit and the Red Sea stretched out before him. He felt trapped, he could not figure any way out of the situation that he found himself in at that moment. So, what did Moses do?

He cried out to God, and God told him to part the Red Sea. By holding out his staff and his hand and the multiplied power of God the waters of the Red Sea were pushed back by the winds from the east and safe dry passage was given to the people of God. A little faith and a lot of multiplication saved the people of God from the armies of Pharaoh.

So, ask yourselves today, what little thing do you have which can be offered to God and multiplied for his people? You might be thinking all I have is my job, or my family or my musical talent or my almost empty bank account. God is saying what little you have, look to me, give thanks, break it, and share it and see how it multiplies in God's kingdom and it glorifies God here on Earth.

Let us pray,

You Know Our Needs before We Ask

Almighty God,
 you know our needs before we ask,
 and our ignorance in asking:
 Set your servants free
 from all anxious thoughts about the future,
 give us contentment with your good gifts,
 and confirm our faith
 that as we seek your kingdom,
 you will not let us lack any good thing;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Source: Augustine of Hippo

Hymn #400: "Spirit of the Living God"

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me;
 Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
 Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me;
 Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me!

Spirit of the living God, move among us all;
 Make us one in heart and mind, make us one in love.
 Humble, caring, selfless, sharing –
 Spirit of the living God, fill our lives with love!

Communion

Invitation to the Table

As we prepare to celebrate holy communion, let us remember that Scripture calls us to examine ourselves before God. We are taught that eating and drinking

unworthily brings judgment upon ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28-29). Let us therefore ask God for the proper spirit in which to celebrate the sacrament.

Almighty God, before whom can be neither secret thought nor hidden deed, grant us your Spirit that we may know our hearts, our lives, and our inmost thoughts as you know them.

Grant us your grace that we may repent sincerely of all sin, find peace with you through our Lord Jesus Christ, and grow in assurance of salvation in him.

May the celebration of our Savior's infinite love in his redeeming death bring joy to us and glory to you.

The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you;
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts;
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God;
It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Holy God, we praise you.
 Let the heavens be joyful,
 and the earth be glad.
 We bless you for creating the whole world,
 for your promises to your people Israel,
 and for Jesus Christ in whom your fullness dwells.
 Born of Mary, he shares our life.
 Eating with sinners, he welcomes us.
 Guiding his children, he leads us.
 Visiting the sick, he heals us.
 Dying on the cross, he saves us.
 Risen from the dead, he gives new life.
 Living with you, he prays for us

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
 heaven and earth are full of your glory.
 Hosanna in the highest.
 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
 Hosanna in the highest.**

With thanksgiving we take this bread and this cup

and proclaim the death and resurrection of our Lord.
 Receive our sacrifice of praise.
 Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us
 that this meal may be
 a communion in the body and blood of our Lord.
 Make us one with Christ
 and with all who share this feast.
 Unite us in faith,
 encourage us with hope,
 inspire us to love,
 that we may serve as your faithful disciples
 until we feast at your table in glory.
 We praise you, eternal God,
 through Christ your Word made flesh,
 in the holy and life-giving Spirit,
 now and forever.
 Amen

The Apostles Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.
 I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;
 he descended to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again;
 he ascended into heaven,
 he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. AMEN.**

Communion

Congregation of Jesus Christ, the Lord has prepared his table for all who love him and trust in him alone for their salvation. All who are truly sorry for their sins, who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus as their Savior, and who desire to live in

obedience to him as Lord, are now invited to come with gladness to the table of the Lord.

Lord, our God, we ask that you send your Holy Spirit so that this bread and cup may be for us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we and all your saints be united with Christ and remain faithful in hope and love. Gather your whole church, O Lord, into the glory of your kingdom.

Breaking of the bread

The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread,
and after giving thanks to God,
he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat.
This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.

Taking of the bread

Take, eat, remember, and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus
Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins

Distribution of the cup

In the same way he took the cup, saying:
This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it,
do this in remembrance of me.

Drinking of the cup

Take, drink, remember and believe that the precious blood of our
Lord Jesus Christ was shed for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

Prayer after Communion

We thank you, O God,
that through Word and Sacrament
you have given us your Son,
who is the true bread from heaven
and food of eternal life.
So, strengthen us in your service
that our daily living may show our thanks,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer**(Congregant Prepared)****Closing Hymn #367: "Jesus the Very Thought of Thee" (V 1,3,5)**

Jesus, the very thought of thee
with sweetness fills my breast,
but sweeter far thy face to see,
and in thy presence rest.

O hope of every contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,
to those who fall how kind thou art,
how good to those who seek!

Jesus, our only joy be thou,
as thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be thou our glory now
and through eternity.

Pastoral Prayer

O God, we give you thanks for your goodness
in the changing times of our lives.
For every occasion you have surprised us with a blessing,
we give you thanks
in the pressures of this present moment,
we are grateful for the strength and courage we find,
knowing you are right beside us.
Give us wisdom and patience
to face a future filled with many questions and challenges.

Help us trust in your goodness
even when we wrestle with what comes next.

Aware of our own needs and the great need around us,
we remember Christ's compassion
and offer our prayers for the world, seeking your guidance
so that we may do our part to share comfort, healing, and hope.

We pray for those who are hungry or homeless in these challenging times,
and all those feeling the stress of rising prices.
Give those with more resources the confidence to share generously.
We pray for those who have lost everything in wild fire or flooding this year,
and for growers facing drought, shortage of workers and uncertain markets.
Guide the leaders in our communities and our nation
as they face these complicated problems.
Give them wisdom and courage to work together
to make decisions for the wellbeing of the most vulnerable.

We pray for all who are sick or in pain, those waiting for diagnosis or treatment,
and all who face chronic health challenges.
Equip those who offer health care to manage the demands they face
to provide care in timely ways.
Bring healing in body, mind, and spirit to all who struggle.

We pray for those who offer hospitality to others this summer
in their homes and workplaces, in their churches and communities.
Keep us alert to the needs of visitors and strangers
and open our hearts so that your goodness will touch those we meet.

Lord Jesus Christ, you walk with us through all the days of challenge and celebration.
Draw near to all who face unexpected sorrow this summer
and join with those who celebrate happy occasions, too.
Be our Bread for the journey to sustain us and encourage us,
whatever the days ahead holds for us.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit, as the One True Living God,
now and forever we pray. **Amen.**

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord be kind and gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor
and give you peace.