

“More Than You Know”

Text: Matthew 14:13-21

In preparation for entering the seminary 30+ years ago, a Lutheran teacher friend of mine gave me a poster that had great meaning for me in those days. It was from St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians: “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think...” (Ephesians 3:20)

That poster was a great gift and reminded me in my early days of training, that God would always provide and was greater than my doubts or feelings of inadequacies. Over the years several had suggested that I consider becoming a pastor. In fact as a very young boy I had a desire to be a pastor, as you may have heard before. It was not until my late 20’s that this happened.

As I reflect back on 30 years as a pastor, and 25 here in this congregation, God’s working has gone far beyond what I ever have imagined. Growing up I would say that I always enjoyed the church and the life it brought. I attended a grade like Trinity, which my account strongly to my first acceptance of a call from you in 1983. as a 36-year-old man, little did I realize that I would still be serving you today. The pastors and teachers I have worked with, not to mention the good people of Trinity have affected my life in greater ways than I could imagine then.

Our text for today gives a great example of God’s providing, even when things seem utterly helpless. We are limited, but our God is not. This is one of the most famous miracles that Jesus performed. It is notable in that it is recorded in all four gospels and shows that Jesus can take meager supplies, bless them and can provide-

MORE THAN YOU KNOW

I. God provides for all of your needs

II. God blesses the use of His gifts to us

I.

A. The events occur after the beheading of John the Baptist. Jesus withdrew for a while, but people were coming to him. Verse 14 tells us: “When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed them.” Earlier in this gospel we have heard of the compassion of Jesus as well as it related to the multitudes. (Matthew 9:36)

Here it is because of their illnesses, and actually their weaknesses. Scripture tells us of God: “A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.” (Isaiah 42:3) Jesus also says, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever come to me I will never cast out.” (John 6:37) That how Jesus views it and we see a perfect example in our text. Because these people are hungry, he has concern for them. He challenged the disciples to faith and action.

Opportunities present themselves to us as well. How do we respond? Do we have the attitude of the disciples? I’m afraid that we must all answer “Yes” to that on some occasions. Yet, faith calls us to trust in God providing, to put away fear, resentment, and inability. Jesus offered a test to his disciples and would say he does so today as well. His working in our lives through faith causes us to move with compassion, be it the Stuebs family, people in the congregation or family members.

B. The word of Jesus brought comfort to the people of that day. It still does today. Jesus was attempting to get some rest, but the people sought him out. That is the draw of God’s word in all times and all places. I had an interesting visit with a man the other day in my office.

He asked me: “Pastor, what do I say to some who says they don’t believe in God?” Maybe you have wondered also. My experience is that maybe confusion may be the same thing in their minds. All that we can do is to explain what God means to what and us that relationship with Jesus Christ has done. In those cases I have taken them to the cross of Christ.

People often focus upon God as the angry judge. Sometimes they focus on the fact that God won’t allow them to have any fun in their lives, they see a relationship with him too confining. You know the love of God in Jesus Christ your Savior and that is the greatest comfort of all,

II.

A. Jesus told his disciples, “They need not going away; you give them some thing to eat.” In other accounts we are told that Jesus said this to test them, but had already decided what to do. Whether this happened immediately or not we really aren’t sure. Perhaps a couple of hours separated his request and the action.

They had a possible solution, but it certainly wasn’t enough for the multitude that was assembled on this occasion. Five loaves and two fishes were all that they had. That wouldn’t stretch too far, or so they thought. We have something similar in the sacraments. Ordinary bread and wine, and ordinary water. What God works in them is truly amazing!

You know the story. Jesus blessed what they had, gave it to the disciples and they gave it to the multitude. As the bread and fished were passed out, a miracle happened. There more than enough for all of them and twelve baskets full were gathered up at the end. There is a similar story in the Old Testament about a widow and oil. She was destitute except for a little bit of oil. Elisha told her to get vessels from the neighbors and they were all filled with oil. The widow and her son sold them and had

enough to live on. (II Kings 4:1-7) There is also a similar story during the time of Elijah (I Kings 17:8-16)

B. Over 5,000 were fed that day from meager supplies! There was still some left over and those were undoubtedly used for others. It is interesting that there are twelve baskets and twelve disciples. They were assisting Jesus in this important work. As a Christian congregation we too assist Jesus in his ministry among us and to the world

What Jesus had given on that day was not wasted, but put to use. It is a reminder to us as well regarding the gifts that God gives to us. What will we do with them? As we examine our gifts from God, we need to understand that God views them differently from the way that we do. We see our limitations and are uncertain of what can be accomplished. God does not look at His gifts to us in that way.

Following our text there is the occasion of Jesus walking on the water. Peter wanted proof so asked Jesus to call him out. Jesus did and Peter walked for a while. God calls us to be faithful in the use of what he has given to us. The feeding of the 5,000 is a good example to us. How did Jesus accomplish that? He performed a miracle. There are many that he performs in nature regularly and also in our lives.

Did the disciples realize what was happening as they passed out food on that day? Probably not, they simply trusted what Jesus told them to do. You and I can do the same today and know that God will provide exactly what we need. His providing and working goes beyond what we can imagine and always accomplishes His greater purposes in our lives. Amen.