

Written Copy: Matthew 14:15-18 “Uncomfortable? Not Enough? More Than Enough!”

10th Sunday @ Pentecost: Proper 13
Sunday, August 6th, 2023

Text: Matthew 14:15-18

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.**”

The text’s intent

Show Jesus as the God who has compassion for His people who are in need of body and soul, who is never too busy to address those needs through His word and His Church. It shows how Jesus is the same God who provided for Israel in the solitary wilderness wanderings. It shows how He has the divine power to create and make enough of out the most meager supply. It shows how He desires His disciples (and His Church) to join with Him in the compassionate care of His people, not just passing the buck onto others. And it shows how when Jesus calls us to do ministry in His name, He can provide more than enough to satisfy His goal and plans and bring glory to Him as our Lord and Savior

Focus Statement:

The Lord is never too busy to address and help us with our needs, and no need is ever too great for Him to fill. Through the life, death, and resurrection of one man, who is also God, He solved the problem of sin, death, and hell. And with the greatest love and compassion He gives us that cure as His free gift. Her calls and empowers us as His Church through the same Gospel Message that saved us to miraculously provide all that is needed for the Lost Sheep around us in this life and into eternal life to come.

Function Statement:

Why it’s important to know:

We can sometimes see God as unwilling or unable to help us when our need seems to be too great. Likewise, we can see the need around us as being too great for us to make a difference. We can be like the disciples and lack the compassionate eyes that Jesus has for the lost sheep around us.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Jesus calls us to minister in His name by looking compassionately at the need around us, seeking what is available in our hands and our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, and watch Him fulfill His promise to provide all that is needed for the ministry He desires to be done.

Subject Sentence: With Jesus We Have More Than Enough to Witness.

Introduction: When We Are Uncomfortable

Think about times when you are uncomfortable, and situations that make you uncomfortable. My situation right now with a fractured knee makes me uncomfortable. But there are other reasons, beyond how our body feels, that can make us feel uncomfortable. Like when you have to change your plans at the last minute. Or when you are asked to do something that you really don't know how to do. Or when it's beyond what you yourself can handle, beyond what you yourself have the means to accomplish. Those times when what is laid upon you seems so huge, so difficult, you just don't know where to start. So, you put it off. Yet it continues to loom over your head. On top of that you've just been so busy, you don't have the will or energy to even consider this seemingly impossible task. I'm sure you've been there. I have too. And so have Jesus disciples in our Gospel Lesson.

When Our Plans Are Interrupted

Jesus and His disciples needed a break. They had just come back from their missionary tour to the towns of Galilee where they had experienced some amazing moments in ministry, given the authority from Jesus to heal the sick, cast out demons, and share the Good News that the Reign and Rule of Heaven has come in Jesus as they shared what He had been preaching and teaching. Jesus wanted to sit down and debrief with them, and they wanted to have that time with Him too. Jesus and the disciples needed to slow down and take a breather. But it was hard with people always coming to Him, wanting to be healed, and hear Him preach. It was non-stop. Perhaps you understand how they felt.

And on top of this, word had just come that Jesus' cousin John the Baptist had been beheaded by Herod. Although Jesus was fully God, He was at the same time fully man. He shared that gut wrenching emotion we experience when a loved one dies, and we are not able to be with them at the end. Jesus needed some time to grieve.

So, Jesus rounded up the disciples quietly, packed them into a boat, and had them set sail for a quiet, remote, and uninhabited area where they could be alone, catch their breath, debrief, and come to terms with John's death. But the crowd that had been following Him had a different agenda. They noticed He had taken off in the boat and they followed Him on foot along the shore. And as they did, they went through the towns and villages along the shore and picked up others who wanted to be wherever Jesus was headed. So, when Jesus and His disciples arrived at their solitary uninhabited place, it ended up being far from that. A huge crowd had already gathered and was waiting for Him: Five thousand men, with untold more women and children, all waiting for Him. To Jesus they looked like sheep without a shepherd. Even though they had intruded upon His time away, He had great compassion for them and healed their sickness and taught them about the kingdom He came to bring.

This was not what the disciples were looking forward to. It was disappointing and uncomfortable to have these people just show up and make them change their plans and ruin their quiet time away.

When The Need Is Too Great

So, when the day was winding down the disciples were more than ready to send this crowd on their way. They approach Jesus and say to Him, “You know Jesus, its past dinner time, and these people are going to be getting hungry. It’s time to stop the teaching and the healing and send them off on their way so they can find a nearby village before it gets dark and get something to eat.”

What Jesus says next in response had to make the disciples extremely uncomfortable.

Matthew 14:16 ¹⁶ **But Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.”** There is an emphasis here on “you”; “you, My disciples.” He was telling them that there was no reason to shove the problem of their hunger off on anyone else. After all, considering the size of this crowd, the villages in the area probably would not be able to accommodate their needs anyway. But for these disciples, Jesus’ command to feed them seemed incredulous. It’s a solitary place. No wheat fields so that people could pluck the grain. No fig trees, no fruit trees. No McDonalds or Burger King, or even a food cart available. Nothing.

At Jesus request, the disciples at least check and see what they have on hand. But this only makes them more uncomfortable. Five loaves and two fish was what they found. It was a dinner packed for a young boy. Maybe it could feed him and his parents, but not in a way that would really satisfy any of them. That is all they had to offer. It was laughable to present that as the answer to Jesus’ command to feed a 5,000 plus crowd. This revelation only moves the disciples past uncomfortable and to the level of hopelessness. But that is only because they did not take into account who it was that had given the command, who it was that was present with them: the gracious, compassionate, all powerful Creator God in human flesh.

When We Are Uncomfortable, God Does His Best Work

Jesus made the disciples uncomfortable. He made them realize and confess that they did not have what it takes to solve this problem. And then He shows them that with Him they always have more than enough of what is needed. Five loaves and two fish, placed in the hands of Jesus, and blessed by Him in the Father’s presence, was more than enough to feed five thousand men plus an untold number of women and children. More than enough, even after going all day with nothing to eat, this crowd was now totally satisfied with what Jesus provided. They were full, so much so that they could eat no more. And there was still more than enough left over: 12 large food baskets worth.

The disciples got to see Jesus in a whole new light. This is the same loving, compassionate, Almighty God who fed their ancestors all they needed to eat during their 40-year wandering in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. He loves to do miraculous things with simple, everyday things that don't look to be great enough to accomplish the task.

This same Jesus would soon provide in a spiritual sense what Isaiah prophetically spoke of in our Old Testament Lesson: a banquet of the best and richest foods which symbolized the best and greatest spiritual blessings God has to give all men. It came as a part of a Passover Seder meal that celebrated God's victory over Egypt for His Old Testament people. It was bread and wine in a physical sense, but Jesus made it so much more because He placed His Real Presence, His body and blood in that bread and wine in what became the Lord's Supper.

This meal was every bit as miraculous as the one in our Gospel Lesson. Not because of the amount or that the finest meat and wine were served. It found its power in an even greater miracle that Jesus would soon perform. In this miracle a man, who by the standards of that day didn't appear to be anything special: a carpenter's son, a travelling rabbi who the religious leaders of the day believed to be a false Messiah and worthy of death. Through this one man's suffering, dying, and rising, the sins of the whole world were atoned for. The death and resurrection of this one man, Jesus Christ, lifted the burial shroud from all mankind. While all of us (barring Jesus return) will face death in this world, because of the sacrifice and resurrection of this one man, who is not just a man, but the Creator God joined with humanity; because of Him no one need suffer eternal death and separation apart from their loving, compassionate, Almighty Creator God.

He makes this gift available to you, each of you personally, through this Gospel Message I have just proclaimed. He impresses it upon your hearts when His Spirit leads you to be uncomfortable regarding your sin, regarding your inability on your own to ever make things right. He makes you see the hopelessness of ever earning a place at the eternal banquet to come, the one that fulfills Isaiah's prophetic words. And by your baptism, the Holy Spirit makes Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for you. Through the gift of faith, He gives you the power to trust that the sacrifice of this one man, who is God in the flesh, is more than enough to give to you a place at His eternal banquet to come.

But while you and I wait for that day to come, our gracious, loving, Almighty God comes to us now. He comes to provide for our deepest spiritual needs as we battle with the world, with sin, and all the other problems in this life. He comes to you and feeds you with a meal that is more miraculous than the one in our Gospel Lesson. It may not look like much: a dry little wafer, a sip of wine. But in the hands of Jesus, because He is truly present when you “take and eat”, that wafer and wine is more than enough to renew and strengthen your faith in Him and all that He has done for you. It is more than enough to grant you continued forgiveness of sin, salvation, and eternal life. He comes to remove your uncomfortableness, your fear, and your despair, and replace it with His comfort, peace, and love. He does this every time you partake of His Supper in faith, because He is the merciful, compassionate Almighty God who loves to make what seems inadequate to be more than enough in His hands.

When Jesus Says: You Feed Them

Jesus said to His disciples “You yourselves feed them.” That made them feel uncomfortable and hopeless. But Jesus showed them there was no need to feel that way when He is present. That’s because His presence made sure they had more than enough to fulfill His plan and purpose.

But does He ever say to you and me, His Church, “You feed them”? He told Peter when He restored him to his place as the leader of His Church in **John 21:15** “**Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?**” He said to him, “**Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.**” He said to him, “**Feed my lambs.**” Jesus wasn’t telling Peter to go and cook a great banquet, but through what we sometimes see as insignificant and inadequate means, which is God’s Word, Jesus was telling Peter, and through Peter us His Church, to feed all who will listen the spiritual nourishment that only the Gospel can bring. As He prepared to ascend to the right hand of the Father He told the disciples, and through them us as well **Matthew 28:19-20** **¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**” Go and feed them the Gospel through the witness of your words and through my gift of baptism. And Jesus promises we do not do this alone, He remains with us as the power to make what seems insignificant more than enough.

So how do we, Lamb of God Lutheran Church, go about doing this? Certainly, as we have opportunity, through the one-on-one witness of our faith in Jesus Christ with those the Lord puts in our path. Certainly, by inviting friends and neighbors to join us for worship. But you know, there is something special about a meal. Jesus used the feeding of the 5,000 to witness to a multitude His power, compassion, and grace. While we confess that He pours out those things upon all who assemble with us for worship, the thing is, the prospect of attending a worship service at a Church you have never been to before, especially for those who have been unchurched for most of their lives, is a daunting task. But a great way to soften that is by inviting friends and acquaintances to one of our fellowship events. As we see from our Gospel Lesson, and other places where Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners, a meal can provide an open door to the Gospel and to becoming members of Christ's Body, the Church.

Still, those meals and fellowship events we have in our Fellowship Hall, mean that a person must enter into a building and a situation that is unknown and uncomfortable. But Jesus has provided a great blessing for us to help with that: our Pavilion. It's not behind closed doors but out in the open where guests can feel less uncomfortable. It's visible from both Van Slyke and Maple Roads so that even if people don't stop by this time around, they see we are an active Church that reaches out to our neighbors with the same love and compassion that Jesus shows. It's on the path that people from the apartments behind us walk to go to the corner store. It's the ideal situation for us to reach out as they walk by and invite them to join us. And if they don't join us this time around, maybe they will in the future. It's where we will have a good portion of our VBS next week. It's where Pastor would like us to have some future picnic and fellowship events so that we can visibly reach out to our neighbors, right here where our Lord has placed us to be His shining light, to those whom He is telling us "You give them something to eat." It's why I am so thankful for the campaign to raise money to pave a sidewalk out to the pavilion. I pray it makes it more accessible for us and for all to utilize this great gift to feed our neighbors both physical and spiritual nourishment, through the power and presence of Christ, who promises to be with us and provide for what is needed to do the work He has planned for us.

Conclusion

Jesus made the disciples uncomfortable with His command “You give them something to eat.” It was not what they had planned on doing, and they had to sacrifice their time of relaxation with Jesus to do it. They didn’t think they were equipped for the task, especially given what they had available in their hands. We can feel the same way as well. But when we put what Jesus has already given to us back into His hands: our time, talents, treasures, even the Pavilion, He can and will do miraculous and wonderful things with it. He will accomplish all that He has planned for us to do. He has planted us here in this place to give our neighbors the food that is His Word, the Gospel. He works in us through those times we feel uncomfortable. He works through means that sometimes seem inadequate: a Gospel Lesson preached, your words of witness, a meal of ordinary food. He works to show and confirm with us that He blesses these things to make them more than enough. Just as He did with the life, death, and resurrection of one man, Jesus Christ, for the sins of the whole world. He is more than enough for you, for them-our neighbors, and for the whole world. Amen.