

100222 Sermon "Five Loaves and Two Fish" Matthew 14:13-21

The feeding of the multitude with five loaves of bread and two fish is the only one of Jesus' miracles that's written in all four Gospels. Commonly, what's recorded in one Gospel is not necessarily recorded in other Gospels. At best, it would be recorded in two or three Gospels. However, the importance of this miracle can be seen in the fact that it is recounted in all four Gospels.

Given the culture of counting only adult males at the time of Jesus, we can expect that it must have been a crowd of 15,000 or 20,000 from the fact that there were about five thousand adult males. This also shows that the fame and popularity of Jesus were on the rise, and much attention was concentrated on Jesus after the death of John the Baptist.

We had wonderful Rally Day two weeks ago, and it was an event that people had signed up to see what kind of food they would like to bring in advance and the church leaders planned it: who sets up the tables and chairs, who runs the kids' program, who cleans all these things after the event is over, and so on. However, in the Gospel of Matthew about 20,000 people gathered here without any plan or any sign-up in advance. As the people gathered to hear the words of Jesus, it was getting dark and the people were hungry. It is what it is. Don't you think you can hear people's concerns?

In this urgent situation, the disciples brought up the idea of sending the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food. This was a reasonable solution. Jesus could have agreed to it, but He challenged the disciples that they should feed them, in order to show them what kind of work that God wants to do.

The Lord's Prayer---the model prayer Jesus taught His disciples---consists of two parts: the first part is seeking God's will and glory, and the second part is about human needs. But what is the very first human need mentioned immediately after the first part about seeking God's will and glory? Yes, "Give us this day our daily bread." The issue of daily bread came up first.

Jesus said to his disciples, "You give them something to eat!" Jesus must

have known for sure that his disciples did not have much food or money. In verse 17 they answered, "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish."

The message is not simply about God fulfilling our needs. After this miracle, people tried to stop Jesus from leaving them. Knowing that the people were trying to make him a king, Jesus went alone into the mountains. People finally found Jesus in Capernaum, on the other side of the lake. They came to Jesus because they regarded Jesus simply as one to fulfill their needs and desires.

Here, a Greek word for "Tried to stop" is KATECO. It's original meaning is to possess. They tried to possess Jesus. They tried to make him God for themselves only. "Believing Jesus as our Lord" does not mean that we possess Jesus. Rather, it is to acknowledge that we belong to the Lord! We live according to his words. More of Jesus, less of me. People who used to be the masters themselves acknowledge Jesus as their master from now on.

Toward the end of the story of the five loaves and two fish, Jesus let people sit down on the grass in small groups, lifted the foods to pray and bless, and shared them with the disciples, and the disciples shared what they had received from Jesus. Here, the Bible records that there were plenty of leftovers even after everyone was full, although they were lacking at first!

But pause for a second. Here is an important point to think about. No matter how long we have been attending church, if our lives are overwhelmed with worldly calculations, our lives will always be lacking. It may not be wrong, and it may be reasonable, but it is not a life of faith either. But in today's passage, although they lacked at first, when they tried to obey him and share it, they had abundant leftovers.

Why did Jesus leave leftovers rather than providing the exact amount necessary? Was Jesus carried away while performing a miracle and not able to control his power? No! The Bible reminds us over and over of graciousness of God. In our human eyes, we will always feel the lack. Because all we have are five loaves and two fish. However, if we live with faith, Jesus lets us live a

life of contentment, being full although it seemed lacking. He lets us live a life of gratitude! Although it looked lacking, we give thanks always! We do!

How much do you need to own before you are completely satisfied? Those who make \$50,000 a year may think that making \$100,000 will satisfy them. But once they make \$100,000, they will start to see those who make \$200,000 a year. Their dishes, valuables, accessories, fancy car and houses will catch their eyes. No one is satisfied by possessing. Those who have 99 sheep can't fall asleep because they want to make a hundred.

Only Jesus can fill the void in the human heart. Like St. Augustine of Hippo said: "Our hearts are restless, until they rest in You." Jesus invites all who genuinely thirst after him to come to him and drink, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38, NRSV)

There was a young man named Henry Fraser in England who wrote the book called "The little big things." A rugby player, he traveled to Portugal with his friend after finishing his second year of high school. Unfortunately, on the fifth day of his travel, he fell to the ground while diving and hit his head, this accident left him paralyzed from the shoulders down. How painful would it be for a healthy high schooler to be completely paralyzed? But while spending those difficult days, Henry chose gratitude over regret. He said, "There were so many moments before my accident I took for granted. I look back and think: 'If I knew this was going to happen I'd have done so much more.' Once they're taken away, you realize those moments are precious."

He began to give thanks for the sunlight and fresh air. He began to give thanks for what he had and enjoyed. And he began to do things that he could do while sitting on a wheelchair. He put a paint brush in his mouth and began to paint. He wrote books. Later, his paintings were shown all over England and his book became the best-seller.

At the end of his book, Henry recorded his reply to people's question "How are you feeling?" which assumed that he would be depressed. "What about

me? I wake up every morning, giving thanks for all that I have and enjoy. Each day I get up, I do what I enjoy doing. I have to push myself in many ways. I am always learning and always progressing. Although many people may not think so, I think I am such a fortunate person. I have no reason to be down. I have so many things to be happy about. I have no reason to think about what it would be like if I hadn't had this accident. The past is already gone, and I cannot change it. I should just accept it. Life becomes simpler and happier when I look at not what I can't do but what I can do. Everyday is a good day."

What transformed Henry whose body was paralyzed? Rather than overwhelmed by his appearance, he was able to take a step back and look. When he took a step back, he saw things that he should be grateful for, not things to complain about. He saw not what he couldn't do but what he could do. He saw not misfortune but happiness. He saw not the end of life, but a new beginning.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, I hope and pray that we would eat the Word of God that gives us life each day. Whenever we partake his body and his blood through the Holy Communion, let us remember and be thankful for what we have and who we are. Share what you have with others. That way, the miracle of the five loaves and two fish is not limited to two thousand years ago, but we would experience God's presence in our lives. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.