



Saint John United Methodist Church
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Message for March 20, 2022
“Lay Down Your Worries”
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: Mark 6:30-44

Trusting in God’s Provision above All

The last bag in the car before we go on a trip is the bag of food we take. It is usually filled with all sorts of snacks. You never know when the notion strikes to eat something. You certainly wouldn’t want to be without.

We’re much the same way when it comes to packing. We always overpack. Even when I think I’m under packing I overpack. I wouldn’t want to be caught without.

In sending out his disciples in Mark 6, Jesus told his disciples to travel light. *“Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts.* He did allow them to wear sandals but advised them against taking an extra tunic. Above all things, Jesus wanted his disciples to trust in God’s provision. We’d do well to do the same.

The disciples would learn about that provision not only as they struck out, but later on at the Feeding of the 5,000. We find that account in Mark 6:30-44, which happens to take place right after the disciples return from being sent out to spread the good news about God’s Kingdom.

Let’s hear then this from Mark 6:30-44.

Mark 6:30-44

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So, he began teaching them many things.

By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?”

“How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.

Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Time to Rest and Re-connect

Upon their return from going out and spreading the good news of God's Kingdom, the disciples gathered around Jesus to give their report of the things they had done and taught. Because there were so many people around them Jesus gathered his disciples, piled them into a boat, and headed to what he thought would be a solitary place.

Jesus knew his disciples needed some time to rest and re-charge. The rhythm of pulling away to re-connect with God was a regular occurrence for Jesus. He wanted his disciples to do that. He wants us to do that as well.

At the End of a Long Day of Ministry

There was something about Jesus. The crowd just wanted to be with him. They were hungry for what he had to offer. They hungered for what only he could provide. Jesus alone has the power to satisfy the hunger of our souls.

In that regard, the crowd would not be denied. They saw Jesus and his disciples making their way across the Sea of Galilee and began to **run** after them. Jesus was that compelling. They just couldn't get enough of him. I long for the day when people run to church, run to a small group, run to a trusted friend, where things are so compelling, they experience Jesus.

By the time the boat made it to shore the people were there waiting for them. They were *"like sheep without a shepherd,"* and Jesus being *"the Good Shepherd"* took compassion on them. He tended to them two ways: He not only fed them spiritually, but he also fed them physically. He tended to their every need.

What we see here is a beautiful image. The grass was green and populated with thousands of people. They were like sheep and Jesus, the Good Shepherd, was among them leading them, taking care of their every need.

Everyone was at the end of long day. The disciples were ready to send the masses on their way. They didn't want to be responsible for feeding everyone. Besides, as they were quick to note, it could have cost at least a half a year's wages.

Jesus though wasn't about to send the people home on an empty stomach, **and** he wasn't about to let the disciples off the hook. Even though they didn't want to be responsible for feeding everyone, Jesus wanted them to do just that.

That's the way it is for those who claim to be Christ's disciples. We bear responsibility to do what we can do to meet the needs of those around us. There is something in us though, if given the chance, to wash our hands of that responsibility. We are quite content to leave that to someone else.

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” has been asked for centuries. We **are** our *“brother’s keeper,”* and our sister’s as well. Looking after others is never convenient. It’s tough to schedule. There is always something that comes up at the most inopportune time. Even so, there’s no excuse for not being there for others, even at the end of a long, hard day.

Scarcity Versus Abundance

The difference between Christ and his disciples is stark at this point. The disciples were mired in a mindset of scarcity. They just couldn’t see how they would ever be able to feed the crowd. They were charged with feeding 5,000 men, not counting the women and children. The disciples didn’t want to have anything to do with feeding such a sizable crowd. In their minds the resources to do that simply weren’t available.

Jesus thought otherwise. *“How many loaves do you have?”* he asked. Their report was, *“five—and two fish.”*

That wasn’t very much, but as we have said often, *“A little is a lot in the hands of Jesus.”* And if it is not a lot, it is certainly enough. Jesus is all about taking care of our needs.

John has it that the five loaves and two fish came from the lunch pail of a little boy—an ample meal for him, not so much for a crowd of 5,000, plus women and children. As the story goes, Jesus took the five loaves and two fish and multiplied them. Everyone ate to the full that day, so much so that there were twelve baskets full left over—one for each of those worrisome disciples.

When it came to the Feeding of the 5,000, all the disciples saw, were challenges. What Jesus saw were possibilities.

I battle a mindset of scarcity all the time. I am way too practical, much too calculating. I am all too quick to consider what **can’t** be, instead of what **can** be. When it comes down to it, my faith is not always where it needs to be, particularly given the fact that God’s desire is to always provide.

It always comes down to faith, doesn’t it? It always comes down to what we believe about God.

We Worry about So Much

Last Saturday, while painting at the Habitat of Humanity house, the three of us painting had about an inch left in the bottom of the bucket. We figured we’d run out well before a new bucket was supposed to arrive. As it worked out, we had just enough with some to spare.

Leading up to last Sunday’s potluck dinner, we wondered if we would have enough food. If you were there you know that we had more than enough with plenty to spare.

We are prone to worry about the silliest things. We also worry about things that are much more serious. It’s just in us to worry. I have heard it said that *“Worry is a small trickle of fear that meanders through the mind until it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.”*

If worry has its way, it can be all consuming. We are good about wringing our hands wondering if we’ll be able to meet the challenges ahead,

It’s then that Christ **challenges** us about our lack of faith and provides abundantly. Whatever you are worried about, Christ is sufficient.

Will We Ever Learn?

When will we ever learn? I'm sure Jesus thought the same about his disciples.

After Feeding of the 5,000 and just a bit later the Feeding of the 4,000, Jesus and his disciples were again on the Sea of Galilee. You can find that account in Mark 8:14-21. It's there that we find that the disciples had seemingly forgotten what took place just earlier at the Feeding of the 5,000, not to mention the Feeding of the 4,000.

They had also forgotten to buy bread and with only one loaf in their possession, started worrying about their next meal. That would not have happened to the Griebs. As I said earlier, our goody bag is always close by when taking a trip.

*"Why are you talking about having no bread?" Jesus asked. "Do you still **not** perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear?"*

And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?"

"And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?"
(Mark 8:17-20)

All of this was another way of saying, *"I provided then, why doubt me now?"* The disciples were slow to learn. They just couldn't scale their worrisome ways. More importantly, they just couldn't lay aside their worries and put their faith in Christ.

Jesus was baffled by their lack of understanding. He was baffled that they hadn't gotten it.

We, just like the disciples in the back of that boat, worry about what's next, even after God has proven himself over and over again. Jesus wants us to open our eyes. His provision is all around us. He wants us to open our ears and listen for the things he is trying to speak into our lives.

We'll never really do that if we are worried all the time if we are always borrowing trouble.

I like what Charles Schultz says about such things, *"Don't worry about the world coming to an end today. It's already tomorrow in Australia."* There's a lot of truth to that.

Jesus is Lord not only of today, but tomorrow as well. Why worry then? He has us in the palm of his hand and will see us through.