



Saint John United Methodist Church
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Message for September 1, 2019
"Plenty to Eat"
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: Mark 6:32-44

The Place of Jesus

I remember like it was yesterday our trip to the Holy Land a few years back. In a word, it was a life changer.

Our first two days were spent in and around the Sea of Galilee. Our home base while there was the city of Tiberias. We arrived at night, only to awake up the next morning to a beautiful view of the Sea of Galilee.

Not nearly as commercial or developed as some places in Israel, the Sea of Galilee and the surrounding area is much like it was during the time of Jesus.

I honestly couldn't believe I was there. This was the place of Jesus. He called his disciples there, taught the masses, and healed the sick.

It was near Bethsaida along the Sea of Galilee that Jesus fed the 5000, a miracle recorded in all four gospels.

He not only fed those gathered, but taught them about faith and the provision that follows when faith is rightly placed.

Jesus also taught his disciples. They too were forced to consider their faith or, better put, their lack thereof. I pray the Lord is causing us to consider the same.

The Feeding of the 5000

Our scripture for today has Jesus and his disciples trying to pull away from the crowd. They had been with the masses for a while and needed some time away to re-charge, so they hopped in a boat and headed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

That's the way it was for Jesus. He would engage in ministry and then get away to seek the refreshment of God's presence.

The people would not be denied. They ran on ahead to where Jesus and his disciples were headed.

The people just wanted to be with Jesus. He has a way of drawing people to himself, including you and me.

The crowd that gathered was at least 5000 men, not counting the women and children. That was a remarkable crowd given the fact that the combined population of the nearby towns of Capernaum and Bethsaida were not much larger.

The scripture shares that Jesus had compassion on those who gathered, even though he and his disciples had not yet taken their break. Ministry doesn't always come at the most convenient times.

Jesus looked upon the masses and said they were like *"sheep without a shepherd."*

He began to teach them and as he did he must have held them spellbound. The day passed quickly. The time for dinner arrived before anyone realized it.

While Jesus was all about offering the *"bread of life,"* he was also concerned about offering bread.

The disciples took a more practical, less faithful stance when it came to dinner. While Jesus wanted to feed the multitude then and there, the disciples were content to send them away.

The disciples were well-aware they were in a remote place and there wouldn't be enough food to go around or so they thought.

And even if they went and purchased some food at the local Chick fil A, it would have cost at least a half year's salary. No wonder the disciples wanted to send the people on their way.

In a word, they just didn't want the responsibility of feeding that many people.

Many of you remember New Song, the outdoor Christian music festival I helped with for years. We usually had anywhere between 5000 and 6000 people.

Feeding 5000 people was a big deal. We went through hundreds of hotdogs and hamburgers, and just about as many pizzas.

Getting Ready for Dinner

Jesus would not be denied. He asked his disciples to poll the crowd about what food they had.

"Five loaves and two fish," was the response.

The Gospel of John has it that a little boy was the one who offered the loaves and fishes. I've always been of the mind that his mom packed his lunch that day and he couldn't wait to share it.

The Gospel of Mark offers wonderful detail about that scene.

Jesus directs his disciples to have everyone sit down *“on the green grass”* in groups of *“hundreds and fifties.”* We can surmise that all of this took place in either the late winter or early spring when the grass was at its best.

The scene there along the Sea of Galilee was very pasture-like. With that in mind, Mark 6:34 states that the people were like *“sheep without a shepherd.”* Jesus had fed them spiritually, now he was getting ready to feed them physically.

The words of Psalm 23 come to mind. *“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.”*

Ezekiel prophesies in Ezekiel 34:23-31 that there would be a day when the true Shepherd would come and the wilderness would become a rich pasture where the sheep would gather and be fed. In Jesus that prophecy was being fulfilled.

Jesus is the one, true Shepherd who provides for all our needs.

As sheep in need of a shepherd, if left to ourselves, we always will end up getting lost. It is only when we let Jesus lead us that we will find our way. Without a shepherd, green pastures will elude us and the nourishment we need, will be hard to find.

Jesus, Our Sufficient Supply

Everyone ate to the full that day. In fact, there was so much left over that twelve baskets were filled with the leftovers, one for each disciple.

When I think of such things I think about the Bread of Life Food Pantry just up the street or Highpoint Ministry in LaGrange or even groups like Kentucky Harvest and Dare to Care. People are still being miraculously fed.

Some have attempted to explain the miracle of the Feeding of the 5000 by saying that because of the little boy's generosity, everyone got with it and shared what they had and thus everyone was fed.

If you read things carefully though, the focus is not so much upon the people and what they did, but upon Jesus and what he did. The Feeding of the 5000 was a miracle in every way.

The message is this: Jesus wants to provide for all our needs. He wanted to get that point across to the crowd. He wanted to make that point with his disciples. He wants to make that point with us.

Twelve Baskets for Twelve Disciples

The disciples must have had a lot going through their minds as they looked upon those baskets stuffed with leftovers. Those baskets were testimony to the fact that God does provide and does so abundantly.

It's no coincidence that there were twelve disciples and twelve baskets.

Jesus was teaching the disciples and teaches us that a little is a lot in the hands of Jesus. His provision is always sufficient. It has a way of meeting our every need and then some.

He's handing us our own baskets where we are left to contemplate and our lack of faith in light of his provision.

Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China once wrote, *"Depend on it. God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply."*

George Mueller who for years supported orphans in his native England depended upon God to supply the food and other items necessary to support the countless number of children he helped in the name of Christ.

Mueller was a man of tremendous faith. In fact, he asserted until the day he died that the Lord never failed to supply for the needs of the children.

On his desk was a placard that brought him comfort and strength. *"It matters to Him about you."*

That was Christ's message all along. He preached in his Sermon on the Mount about God's care for *"the birds of the air"* and *"the lilies of the field."*

"Look at the birds of the air;" he says, *"they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."*

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in his splendor was dressed like one of these."

If that it is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?" Matthew 6:26-30

God's Sufficiency

Since the days when the Children of Israel wandered in the wilderness God has provided and proved himself sufficient.

The Children of Israel who wandered in the wilderness ate manna by day and quail by night. God had set it up so that they had just enough for each day.

We would do well to consider God's daily provision for our own lives.

"Give us this day our daily bread" is Christ's prayer for you and me.

Robert Morgan in his book, *The Red Sea Rules* talks about taking things one day at a time, one step at a time. That what those who crossed the Red Sea had to do and, quite frankly, is what you and I need to do.

Morgan says this, *"We're never sure what will happen a year from now. But the next step is often more obvious. So, in facing any vexing problem, make up your mind to prayerfully take the next logical step by faith."* Robert Morgan

Jesus says in Matthew 6:34, *"So don't be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time."* (Matthew 6:34 TLB)

God Is Looking for People Ready to Trust Him

God is looking for people who trust that he is all about meeting their needs. He wants us to offer what we have so he can take it and multiply it in miraculous ways.

God's provision is more than adequate. His presence and supply is more than sufficient.

Those who gathered there by the Sea of Galilee at the Feeding of the 5000 would live to testify to that fact.

Hungering and Thirsting for Righteousness

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

In the end that's what those gathered along the Sea of Galilee were after and they chased after Jesus to find it.

They were not be left wanting. There was plenty to eat that day. The loaves and fishes were good, no doubt, but what Jesus offered their souls was even better.

His was the offer of new life, an offer that extends to this day.

I pray that with faith you respond and place your life in his care. He will not disappoint you. You can be assured of that. Jesus is able to fill you like no one else can.

Viaticum

Early on, the Lord's Supper was called the Viaticum. The Viaticum was a provision of necessities given to a Roman magistrate for any journey to an outlying province.

The Viaticum contained everything that was needed for the journey ahead.

The early church took that notion and applied it to the Lord's Supper. They had come to understand that the Lord's Supper was the very thing needed for their journey ahead.

It still is today. God still provides. The Lord is still sufficient.