

“There’s Always Enough”
Providence United Methodist Church
Message by DD Adams
July 26, 2015

Today’s gospel lesson is taken from the book of John, chapter 6, verses 1 through 21. I’ll be reading from *The Common English Bible*. After this Jesus went across the Galilee Sea (that is, the Tiberias Sea). A large crowd followed him, because they had seen the miraculous signs he had done among the sick. Jesus went up a mountain and sat there with his disciples. It was nearly time for Passover, the Jewish festival.

Jesus looked up and saw the large crowd coming toward him. He asked Philip, “Where will we buy food to feed these people?” Jesus said this to test him, for he already knew what he was going to do. Philip replied, “More than a half year’s salary worth of food wouldn’t be enough for each person to have even a little bit.”

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said, “A youth here has five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that for a crowd like this?” Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass there. They sat down, about five thousand of them. Then Jesus took the bread. When he had given thanks, he distributed it to those who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish, each getting as much as they wanted. When they had plenty to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather up the leftover pieces, so that nothing will be wasted.” So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves that had been left over by those who had eaten.

When the people saw that he had done a miraculous sign, they said, “This is truly the prophet who is coming into the world.” Jesus understood that they were

about to come and force him to be their king, so he took refuge again, alone on a mountain.

When evening came, Jesus' disciples went down to the lake. They got into a boat and were crossing the lake to Capernaum. It was already getting dark and Jesus hadn't come to them yet. The water was getting rough because a strong wind was blowing. When the wind had driven them out for about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the water. He was approaching the boat and they were afraid. He said to them, "I Am. Don't be afraid." Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and just then the boat reached the land where they had been heading. This is God's word for God's people. Thanks be to God.

Let's pray. God of all-sufficiency and God of Abundance, allow our minds and hearts this morning to believe of what is possible with you. Stretch our thinking to understand it's not solely about our resources, our problem solving, or our influence that makes the difference. Amen.

I found both of these stories to be a tender response by Jesus that meets some of our most basic human needs. Jesus feeds the hungry and calms the frightened. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life"—the one who supplies bread for food and nourishment for your spirit. He is the bread of abundance in all of the stories we read about in Scripture. In this story in particular, we find multitudes of people following him, and an abundance of fragments left over.

It makes one wonder why we concern ourselves about not having enough. Our thinking embraces a mind-set of scarcity. Yet we read how Jesus performs an impossible undertaking—as we would call it. He feeds 5,000. What were the people looking for in Jesus? Perhaps the people followed him for a free lunch, or maybe they were hoping to receive a divine healing.

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“More than a half year’s salary worth of food wouldn’t be enough for each person to have even a little bit.” One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said, “A youth here has five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that for a crowd like this?”

It wasn’t the first time this week I’d heard the phrase, “I’m worried whether we’ll have enough.” This thought is on the mind of many and always has been. The Israelites hoarded the manna from heaven only to find out it had a shelf life of one day. We look at our pension statement and say, “Just a few more years dear and then we’ll have enough.” Fact is we’re only given enough for the day. Maybe that’s what the young boy in the feeding miracle can teach us. He had five barley loaves and two fish. Yet out of that, Jesus made plenty.

In fact, the fragments that were gathered at the end of dinner showed the abundance. So why do we concern ourselves with not having enough? **Maybe our view of not having enough is just a perceived shortage?** We’re challenged with the concept of seeing the possibilities when all we can see is the impossibilities. We see scarcity rather than the abundance that God can produce.

I’m sure those who went about with Jesus regularly concerned themselves with providing for the poor. They too were probably a little anxious about the future of their religious community—especially in difficult economic times—just as we are in today. We focus on survival and the careful management of our monies. But all this can sidetrack us from our true mission if it takes precedence over why we’re here as a church.

I think the young lad had a divinely inspired idea—bring what you have to Jesus and share it. God will take care of the rest. Yes, we make use of the rational mind God gave us, but we realize that at the end of the day, it’s God who blesses and gives the growth. Remember the farmer from last week who attempts to calculate so carefully where the seed falls? He soon realizes he can’t do it to

perfection; there are just too many challenges like the wind, the weeds, the birds, and so forth. So we need to come to Jesus and understand it's out of our control. We need to leave it in the hands of God.

When the young lad came to Jesus, all he knew was what the crowd needed—sustenance. As a church, Holy Communion provides the spiritual strength and nourishment we need to serve others. When we sup with the Lord, we come to the altar just as we are. We're hungry and in need. We come fragmented and broken. We come just as we are, and we leave this place more equipped to become the hands and feet of Christ. We receive what the bread was intended for—to strengthen us to serve. The bread of life, the Christ, moves in us to become living bread for the world. And as we serve, we're healed and become whole.

And along our spiritual journey, we become frightened. We wonder if we'll perish in one of the many storms we endure? We wonder where Jesus is and how we'll be saved from a storm that has us up over our heads in water and we're almost drowning? And so many other times, we wonder if they'll be enough. But Jesus comes to us. He's watching and he's present with us to tenderly comfort and bring hope and peace once again

Andrew said there's a boy here with five barley loaves and two fish, but it's not enough. Jesus sees the possibilities, and in so many words he says, let's begin with that. *So, let's begin with that.* Let's see the possibilities in advance that God will provide for us as a church. Let's watch God's multiplication and the gathering up of the fragments so nothing is lost. Let's have enough trust just for the day, and experience the love God pours down on our lives. Because deep down, we know, it's not us that have the control; it's God. God's grace poured down on us in the waters of our baptism. Water poured over us with the presence of God's spirit that's in the bread and wine that extends love and mercy.

Let's pray. God of grace and love, move in us as we realize and acknowledge that in you, there's always enough. It's in you we live, and move, and have our being. For you are able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all, and more than we could ever think or imagine. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.