

Satisfied

Matthew 14:13-21

August 6, 2017

First United Methodist Church, Lindstrom

(This is a manuscript prepared for sermon delivery and may not represent actual words spoken.)

They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

We have here a passage with which we are very familiar. This is the only miracle, other than the resurrection, that is found in all four Gospels. We pretty much have a handle on this one. But there is this one thing. I think this miracle maybe shows us that Jesus gives us what we need...not always what we want...but what we need.

Some of you know that this text holds a special place with me. It was the text I used for the first sermon I ever preached...October of 1977 in the Wesley United Methodist Church in Hibbing. I do not recall all the details of that day...other than I was extremely nervous...and when I was finished, I was glad it was over...and also glad I would never have to do that again. And now over two thousand sermons later, I still preach the occasional sermon on this passage.

Our text begins, "When Jesus heard what had happened...." What he had heard—what had happened—was John the Baptist had been beheaded. John the Baptist was the one who had prepared the way for Jesus. His was a bold ministry. Jesus and John the Baptist were also related. We know that their mothers were relatives of one another. Word of John's death would have troubled Jesus.

So Jesus heard about this, and he wanted to get away by himself for a time. I think we can understand and appreciate this. But when the crowds of people heard that Jesus went off by himself, they wanted to find him. Now notice something. And this is something I did not notice or give attention to until just these past couple of weeks as I read this passage...and meditated on

it. Our text says that Jesus withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Then it says, "When Jesus landed and saw the crowd...." It would appear that Jesus never made it to that solitary place.

It would appear that Jesus never got to be alone. So this crowd did not interrupt his solitude; the crowd prevented his solitude. And instead of being irritated, the text says Jesus had compassion. He had compassion on the people and healed their sick.

In contrast to Jesus' compassion is the disciples' consternation. Only they did try to mask their irritation with compassion. They told Jesus to send the people away. It was late and the people needed to get some food. It sounded good. But what they meant was they wanted Jesus just to get the people out of there.

We know how the story goes. I'll give my rendition of it in just a couple of seconds.

Number of lessons have been drawn from this. I like the part where the text says the people were satisfied.

Satisfied. Satisfaction. That is kind of a cool deal there. To be satisfied. To be satisfied simply means we have had a desire or wish fulfilled. To be satisfied is to have an appetite fulfilled. So many times I have complained about what I didn't have...only to have someone tell me to be satisfied with what I do have. So there is a sense in which being satisfied is being happy with what I have.

You know, when meditating on Scripture—especially some of the stories—Old Testament stories—the miracles—I like to imagine myself in that story. I am there. What do I see? What do I

feel...honestly feel? Try it sometime. It does take a bit of imagination.

So here we have thousands of people. Thousands. Way more than five thousand. The five thousand represents the number of men. There were also women and children. There is one Jesus. Twelve disciples. Five loaves of bread. Two fish. Thousands of people with an appetite. Jesus is about to feed them. He is about to feed them after first telling his disciples to feed them. But they complain about their lack of resources. Just a side note here: do not let a perceived lack of resources serve as an excuse not to do what Jesus asks us to do.

That is what the disciples do in this circumstance. So Jesus takes charge. He first cuts down on the commotion and chaos that is present among thousands of hungry people. So he has them sit down in groups. Fifty, a hundred to a group. This would make the serving easier. So there are groups of hungry people all over the place. The disciples bring bread and fish to each group. The people then pass the food among themselves.

People are wondering where they are getting all this food. The groups in the back can't see all that is going on. They are getting the food from Jesus. I'll tell you what I don't see. I don't see a mountain of bread and fish behind Jesus. I just see the disciples going to Jesus. And each time they go to Jesus he gives them more bread and more fish. The disciples wonder where he keeps getting this food. No matter. Each time they go to Jesus, he has more to give them. Jesus just does not run out of bread and fish.

When all is finished, the disciples pick up twelve baskets full of leftovers. Some may think that represents a lot of waste. Not at all. The baskets we are talking about are the twelve small lunch baskets the disciples would have been carrying...one per disciple...lunch baskets that were empty at the start of this deal. Considering there are thousands and all that is left is enough to fill twelve small lunch baskets...pretty good, if you ask me. There are probably several children who are picky eaters. That accounts for what is left.

Jesus gives exactly what is needed...no more...no less. When Jesus gives us what we need, then we experience satisfaction. I think that too often we expect God to give us what we want...or we want God to give us what we want. When we look only for wants to be fulfilled, we may never experience the joy of satisfaction. Talk to God about what you need. Praise God that you have been given what you need. You will experience the joy that comes with simply being satisfied.

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