

Jesus and his disciples found themselves in a deserted place, at the end of the day with a hungry crowd, and only 5 loaves and 2 fish – certainly that was not enough.” There was no way all those hungry stomachs could be filled. There were not enough resources for the needs at hand. And yet, the Gospel writers tell us that something happened, and there was more than enough food!

That is difficult to believe, right? We can argue about how miracles happen, and yet we know they do. This account boggles the imagination, but makes one wonder – in God’s world, is there ever (really) “not enough?”

News headlines daily scream at how little we have – “not enough!” Dire consequences are the norm. How often have we been told that food will run out? That no one will be there to help? That the end is near? On a smaller scale, how does that play out in your daily lives? Are your savings “enough?” Is vacation time adequate? Are you healthy “enough?” Do you have enough friends, or time, or understanding of others? Is there enough love for your marriage to grow or you family to be strong?

Do any people ever really have “enough?” How often do we fear that we are running on empty and there is nothing left to add to the tank?

The origin of any gift puts gift in perspective. It determines both the use and the response.) The “giver” always has a reason for the gift. And the recipient always understands why a gift was given. But after that, in our world, many times we find it is just not enough. Either the gift is perceived to be inappropriate or insufficient, or the giver isn’t impressed with the level of thankfulness that comes back in return.

In God’ realm, everything is different. Because God is “creator” then every thing is a gift. There is no thing that is not GIFT. And so, God is the first and last touch of every gift. There is nothing that is not “of God.’ And when God creates, there is nothing left to add or say. The real question is simply “has God given too few gifts?” Or are the real issues with how God’s gifts are received and used? Those questions lead us back into Matthew’s story about food ... too little food ... not enough for so many!

The background to this miracle was a death! Jesus was startled by news that Cousin John had been beheaded. John had given his entire life simply to prepare hungry people to receive the gift of a Messiah. Like hungry kids waiting for a meal, John had gathered crowds at the river to prepare to feast on the Messiah and his feast which they had waited so long to receive. And John’s earthly reward was death. What a waste! What a loss! What pain!

Jesus had every reason to grieve, be angry, confused and so he first went away to a lonely place to pray. And what he did next was what we call the Feeding of the 5000. Those two stories are one – how would Jesus use gifts at hand?

Was the miracle of loaves and fishes an escape from grief? Or was Jesus showing what God does in the midst of “not enough?” Jesus had lost so much and appeared to have little to work with, and yet, rather than selfishly lament his loss and meager pantry, he reached out to the hungry lives in his midst!

The feeding of 5000 is the ONLY miracle recorded by all four Gospel writers! Why do you think a miracle where there is “obviously not enough” is so important that every Gospel needed to tell it? Why is this miracle so important today? First of all, the miracle was NOT to “prove” Jesus is God, but to announce that God’s gifts are more than enough, and Faith is a unique approach to life!

He proclaimed, “there is always more than enough!” He TOOK ordinary bread. He BLESSED it (giving it a purpose.) He BROKE it (releasing it for service.) He FED hungry (making a few loaves and fishes a GIFT instead of just a THING.) The key begins with seeing every thing as a gift from God – to treat every THING (no matter how meager or insignificant) as HOLY STUFF!

Rather than complaining or worrying about how “little” we have, faith leads us to offer what we have as faith-filled gifts and God does the rest! He provides the miracle simply using the gifts at hand. Isn’t that the point of Easter? Jesus ran out of time. There wasn’t enough understanding. The disciples didn’t have enough patience. The crowds didn’t have enough love. And Jesus carried that emptiness, planted it in a tomb, and blessed the world with the surprise of new life.

Can you imagine his disciples’ thoughts when they told Jesus there was a crowd of 5000 hungry people, it was dinnertime, and there were no restaurants nearby and Jesus told them, “*Sit them down and give them something to eat?*” Their wisdom and experience told them “there wasn’t enough.” And yet *“their eyes were opened to the love of a God who doesn’t let our weakness get in the way of his abundant gift giving!*”

One Sunday, before worship, I noticed a pile of coins on the ground outside the sanctuary. One of the ushers and his son went outside with me and we took a closer look. They were very old, and certainly valuable. I wondered what they were worth. Assuming they had been stolen we called the police.

While we were waiting a young boy noticed and said, “Maybe we should put them in the Sunday school offering and use them to feed hungry people!” What an insightful and yet humbling observation! I saw value because of their “worth.” He saw loaves and fishes to feed hungry people.

Yet if 5 loaves and 2 fish fed thousands of hungry bellies –all indications are that we have enough for what we need to do. That is why it is a goal here at Zion that EVERY member finds at least ONE ministry in which to share gifts – to allow God the opportunity to use the “holy things” in our lives as we TAKE, BLESS, BREAK, and SHARE!

Is there ever “not enough?” What do you think 5000 people and 12 disciples w/ extra baskets of leftovers would tell us if we asked that question of them? Appearances can be deceiving, and miracles are a dime a dozen when God’s gifts are used for the purpose they are given.

Why worry about “not enough” when God always gives us more than we started with! Our job is never to send hungry people home but know that God will keep giving food to feed them! It is not about inventory control but taking, blessing, breaking, and feeding.

We are blessed beyond belief – may our gifts give glory to God and life to the world we live in! Amen.