**August 2, 2020 Matthew 13:13-21 NRSV**

***Little Is Much When God Is In It***

**Scripture: Matthew 14:13-21 NRSV**

*(13)Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. (14)When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. (15)When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." (16)Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." (17)They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." (18)And he said, "Bring them here to me." (19)Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. (20)And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. (21)And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.*

**Notes:**

1. The crowds continue to ***follow*** Jesus
   1. Jesus is a ***loving***, caring, and feeling person.
   2. ***Little*** is much when God is in it.
   3. The boy ***willingly*** surrenders everything for Jesus to demonstrate something glorious.
2. Only in the Kingdom of God are we able to see such ***multiplication***.
   1. If you are ***willing*** to give everything you have to Jesus, He will use it to make a difference in our world and our lives.
   2. You will find the ***contentment*** of doing His will.
   3. The ***joy*** of the Lord is found, when we rid ourselves of our ***greed***, our self-centeredness;
   4. You all have a ***gift***; you only need to learn how to share it with others.
3. God can make something great out of what we ***give***.
   1. There is no effort that is a ***waste*** of time, when souls are saved, lives are changed
   2. We ***need*** God’s Kingdom that Jesus died to offer.
   3. When we sit at the table of our Lord, we must put others ***first***, considering their needs and desires before we ***fulfill*** our own.

**Script:**

Every year but this year children’s camp occurs the first full week of August, this year that would have been tomorrow. When I went as a counselor, the boys in my cabin would always come to meal times with appetites so large and wanting to consume everything they saw; they couldn’t see that there was enough food on the table to fill their empty bellies. Many times, meals turned into free for all. Each of the boys would forget their manners, they would take multiple servings of meat and multiple servings of food; and they had little or no consideration for those who had not been served yet, including myself. But you could see it in their eyes, they are hungry and they do not care at all about the person sitting next to them, they want fed and they want it now.

I have often wondered where they learn such habits and behaviors. And then I remember some family reunions I have attended. At one such reunion as somebody asked the Lord’s blessing, I could hear the shuffle of feet, people getting lined up with the serving line so they could make it through first. As I opened my eyes you could see them working their way down the line taking the very best of what lies before them, caring not for the person who may get none, at the end of the line.

We tend to think only of ourselves when it comes to the needs of our community. We think of what we have contributed and what we deserve in exchange for it. We think of how hard we have worked to attain our comfortable lifestyle. We look accusingly at those who do not have, because they did not prepare for the time when they would be hungry. We cop an attitude that those who do not work do not deserve the right to sit at the table.

I can see where we should have an attitude of working towards what we receive. But then again, how many of us really deserve what we think we should receive. An honest day’s work never hurts anybody, but should we be helping those who do not contribute to the community?

We have all heard the story of the feeding of the 5000. But have we ever sat back and looked at what is really taking place here? Have we ever looked at the attitudes of the different groups of people, those who are present in this place, on this particular day? Share with me in the reading of our passage this morning, Matthew 14:13-21.

(13)Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. (14)When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. (15)When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." (16)Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." (17)They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." (18)And he said, "Bring them here to me." (19)Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. (20)And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. (21)And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. **Matthew 14:13-21 NRSV**

Prior to this passage, Jesus has learned of the death of his cousin, John the Baptist. We never really learn much of the relationship between the two, but we know that John speaks of the coming of Jesus, he baptizes Jesus after stating that it should be Jesus baptizing him, John was then imprisoned, John sends his disciples to make sure Jesus is the one that he had been speaking of, and Jesus sends back word that, “…the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them” (Matthew 11:4-5 NRSV). John received his answer, John’s time was drawing to a close. Herod is afraid to put John to death, but he wanted John out of the picture. However, in order to maintain his pride, Herod is tricked into putting John to death; and, he has John the Baptist beheaded. After hearing of this news, Jesus retreats to a boat seeking solitude and he takes some time to reflect upon what is taking place.

As we come to today’s passage we see over and over again, the crowds just cannot seem to get enough. They follow him; as he teaches, as he heals the sick and maimed, even in his mourning, the crowds continue to follow him. They hear he is traveling by boat and go by land to where his boat is traveling, hoping to get a chance to hear, to see, and to learn from, hoping to experience this new teacher who has burst onto the scene. The crowds are seeking their own filling of what they desire, or what they think they need and even think they deserve.

We find Jesus coming into the crowds. He performs some miracles as signs of his identity. He performs other miracles to teach important truths. And as we have heard over the past few weeks they have heard him teach; they have heard him telling stories in the form of parables. But here we read that he healed people because he "had compassion on them."

Jesus was, and is, and always will be a loving, caring, and feeling person. John tells us that God is love, Jesus is God’s one and only son, so it makes sense that he would have the same qualities of his father, God. Being God incarnate he demonstrates God’s love in all that he is doing.

As the day fades away, we find the disciples approaching Jesus with concern for the crowds. It is getting late and because they were in a secluded location meaning there were not ample means for food there were not places for the people to find shelter for the night, so the disciples suggest that Jesus send the crowds away. The disciples did not have the resources to meet the people’s needs. And the scripture suggests that there were 5000 people which in this era may suggest that there were 5000 men, as well as their wives and children.

So with potentially 10000 to 15000 people if you include women and children. I can understand the panic in the disciples’ minds. How could they feed 15000 people when they came with nothing for themselves, let alone others? But we know there is more at work here, right? We know that little is much when God is in it.

The disciples are frantic, the only food they are able to find in this story is a young boy who most likely had a mother who would not to let him, go to a large gathering without something to eat. So here is a young boy who has come prepared with five barley loaves and two fish. In the Gospel of Matthew, we read that the bread and fish are there. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus sends the disciples to seek out if there is any food available in the crowd. In the Gospel of Luke, the disciples state that “…we have no more than five loaves and two fish.”

It is only in the Gospel of John that we hear of this boy, who had come prepared for a day of listening to the teacher and brought his lunch. It is Andrew who mentions the boy and his basket of food. It never states clearly whether the boy gave up his food or it was commandeered. But for the sake of the story we must assume that this boy is so taken back by the teacher that when asked if he would contribute what he had; he willingly surrenders everything he possesses. Why? in order for the teacher to demonstrate something glorious.

Jesus has the people sit in groups of 50 people. Jesus then took the loaves into his hands, He gives thanks for what was given, then he hands each of the 12 disciples a basket with a portion of the bread in it. As the baskets are passed around, each person takes a portion then passes it on. Jesus does the same with the fish and the process is repeated. When everybody had enough to eat, Jesus has the disciples gather up the leftovers, amounting to twelve baskets full.

I am not sure about your math skills, but to me five loaves of bread, loaves small enough for a young boy to carry, five loaves will not create twelve baskets full of broken pieces. We only find this in the Kingdom of God. This is the only place that we are we able to see such multiplication.

This brings me to a couple of questions. Why have we come to this place today? Some of us have come because we seek to hear the word of God. Others come to give praise and worship to the King of Kings, our Lord and Savior. Others are here seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and others; well others are here because this is what we do on Sunday. This is how we remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

But no matter why you are here, there is one thing you should remember. If you are willing to give everything you have to Jesus, He will use it to make a difference in our world and our lives. Much like the parable of the Mustard Seed, what seems like so little can be multiplied by God into something so large.

You may feel the stress of the world. You may feel as if it is a struggle to get out of bed in the morning. But if you willingly make the sacrifice of giving all that you can to the work of the Lord, you will find the contentment of doing His will. The joy of the Lord is found, when we rid ourselves of our greed When we rid ourselves of self-centeredness; when we consider those, who don’t have or have less than we do and when we do what we can to help them.

Many of you may respond, “I don’t have that much.” You have much more than you may have ever considered. How do you serve the Lord? How do you minister to the less fortunate? What do you have to offer the least of these? What do you have that you have hidden away in the cubby holes of your world? You all have a gift; you only need to learn how to share it with others.

We often feel the little bit we have to give is not enough to make a difference in the church. But, if we are willing to give everything we have to Jesus, he can multiply it over many times. He can make something great out of what we give.

So many times, we have this negative attitude about giving up what we have because others will misuse. My time is much too valuable to waste it at the church. I put my time in, now it is somebody else’s turn. My money is my money and I will spend it the way I see best. If I do not like the way the church is handling its finances, I will just give my tithes to another church. I have heard them all. But you know what? When we give it away, it isn’t ours anymore!

We have a tendency to find ways to think that the things we do as a church are waste of time, money, and effort. There is no effort that is a waste of time Especially when people are getting involved in the work of the church. Especially when souls are saved; especially when lives are changed.

We have got to start looking at the big picture. If we sit in Sunday School class and do not participate in the discussion, nobody will ever be able to benefit from our experiences. If we do not begin to attend the fellowships that are scheduled as a church, then it seems as if we could care less about the other people of this church. If we refuse to let others know about our hardships and trials, we will never be able to allow others to pray for us or with us. We have got to give up our self. We have got to release the stronghold we have on this world, so we can get a grip on the kingdom that Jesus died to offer us.

Consider this young boy who surrendered his basket of five loaves and two fish. Do you think after this experience with Jesus, he went home complaining about how he had his lunch taken away by one of the teachers’ disciples? NO! I am going to guess that he went out and told everybody he knew what had happened. He wasn’t going to complain; He was out bragging about how he had a part in the work of the Messiah. He is not going to pout about losing a lunch, His is bragging about his lunch feeding 15000 people; and all he had to do was give up his lunch.

If we are willing to give everything we have to Jesus, He will use it to make a difference in our world and our lives. So what do you have that you are able to give? It doesn’t take much; a few minutes here; a few dollars there. There are young people in this church that can be forever influenced by your encouragement. There are people in this church who could benefit from your knowledge.

You do not have to force it on them, but offer it up and if they are willing to listen; a bond is made and one person working alone has just become a team working together. But if they decline your offer, don’t be discouraged. We have got to get past the self-centeredness of our modern society. We must begin to work together, sharing our resources, sharing our time and effort to build God’s Kingdom, and our community. When we sit at the table of our Lord, may we put others first, considering their needs and desires before we fulfill our own.