

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Ordinary Miracles

Sermon Reflection Notes

The Bible contains a lot of miraculous stories; Noah's Ark, the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey, and this week's scripture lesson, Jesus feeding the 5000 with 5 loaves of bread and two fish. We may be over-spiritualizing these stories though and ignoring some details. This week we are invited to hear the story of the feeding of the 5000 as a real story.

The scripture begins with the disciples reporting back to Jesus; they'd been out preaching and teaching and had had a long day. They must have been tired. The scripture literally says: *Many people were coming and going, so there was no time to eat.* We can imagine what that would have felt like. We even have a slang word for it now: *hangry*...when someone is tired, hungry, and generally done for the day. It's at this moment Jesus instructs the disciples to do something we often skip over in this story; he tells them to come away to a secluded place and rest. Rest. It is telling that we often skip over this particular detail. Like the disciples, we may be doing good work, but when was the last time we intentionally rested? We are called to do good work for God. We are called to ministry, but ministry will take your life if you let it. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, even said to do all you can...not all a small army can. Just you. Do what you can. And then, we are invited to rest. Jesus rested, retreated, and then resumed his work.

The next part of the story might feel familiar too. When the disciples and Jesus arrived at their 'deserted place,' a crowd was waiting for them. They weren't supposed to be there, but there they were. Jesus had compassion for the crowd and began to teach them. And then, "late in the day" his disciples came and reminded Jesus that it had already been a long day, and then the day just kept going, and could Jesus please send the crowd home because now everyone was even more tired and hungry AND no one had planned on feeding all these people anyway. But Jesus had other ideas. 'You feed them,' he said. The disciples, like we would, began protesting: *exactly how are we supposed to do that? With what money? With what food?* It's a scarcity mindset on display. *There isn't enough. We're going to run out. It won't work.* But Jesus isn't thinking that way. He simply directs the disciples to gather what they do have (5 loaves of bread and 2 fish), get everybody to sit down in groups as though they were going to have a banquet, and then Jesus takes the bread, breaks it, and tells the disciples to give it all away.

Jesus essentially was saying, *let's give them everything we've got and see what they will do next.* We like to jump to the supernatural here and imagine this miracle where the loaves and fishes just magically kept dividing. But that also requires us to suspend the laws of nature and our disbelief and that's not how the world works. What happened was an ordinary miracle. God in the flesh chose to have faith in and trust people. God in the flesh suspended the scarcity mindset and trusted that others would offer to share. That there was more food than what the disciples could see. That abundance actually existed in the community.

That is the miracle of the story. It's ordinary and often overlooked, but it's a miracle nonetheless. And what was true for the feeding of the 5000 is also true today. We are a church that partners with God and with our neighbors. God is moving in so many beautiful ways in and through this congregation. We are called to trust in God who is abundantly generous with us, to trust each other and be abundantly generous ourselves, and to trust the ordinary miracles that show us again and again that in God's kingdom, there is always more than enough.

Scripture

Mark 6:30-44

³⁰The apostles returned to Jesus and told him everything they had done and taught. ³¹Many people were coming and going, so there was no time to eat. He said to the apostles, "Come by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while." ³²They departed in a boat by themselves for a deserted place.

³³Many people saw them leaving and recognized them, so they ran ahead from all the cities and arrived before them. ³⁴When Jesus arrived and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then he began to teach them many things.

³⁵Late in the day, his disciples came to him and said, "This is an isolated place, and it's already late in the day. ³⁶Send them away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy something to eat for themselves."

³⁷He replied, "You give them something to eat."

But they said to him, "Should we go off and buy bread worth almost eight months' pay and give it to them to eat?"

³⁸He said to them, "How much bread do you have? Take a look."

After checking, they said, "Five loaves of bread and two fish."

³⁹He directed the disciples to seat all the people in groups as though they were having a banquet on the green grass. ⁴⁰They sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹He took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed them, broke the loaves into pieces, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²Everyone ate until they were full. ⁴³They filled twelve baskets with the leftover pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴About five thousand had eaten.

Discussion Questions

1. This scripture could be interpreted as Jesus deciding the crowd was having a potluck and he brought the bread and fish. What makes a potluck? What makes one legendary or memorable?
2. Why do we sometimes hold back the smallest gifts we could share? (*like a small monetary donation or 2 fish to feed 5000 people*) What mindset keeps us from sharing our smallest gifts?
3. What is meant by "living in a world" where scarcity is the ideology, the norm? How is that played out in the world in which we live?
4. Who in our life has taught us about scarcity? Who in our life has taught us about abundance? What were we taught? What experiences have we had?
5. Pastor Andy said that he believes "God in the flesh chose to have faith in and trust people." What does it mean that "God in the flesh" chose faith and trust in people? We talk about us having faith and trust a lot, but what does it mean that "God in the flesh" chose that too?
6. How will we live differently because God trusts and has faith in us?

Closing Prayer

Holy God, we know the story of the loaves and fish so well, but we live, after all, in a world where that story just does not work. In this world where scarcity appears to be reality for us, we know that we need to make sure we have enough in our bank accounts, we know that prices keep going up, we know that there is not enough now, much less enough for the future. We live in a world of anxiety, and fear, and scarcity.

And yet, the story of Jesus and the loaves and fish calls us to consider a different narrative. It is a call to notice the abundance of creation all around us. It is a call to hear Jesus' words "take, bless, break, and give," which is a radical new revamping of the economy. It is a call to see that Jesus' economy of abundance cannot be squeezed into an economy of scarcity.

So we pray for eyes to see, for ears to hear, and for openness to imagine that we have enough, more than enough. And give us the hearts to imagine that we too can share so that **all** will have enough. We pray in the name of the One who gave up his very life so that we might receive new life. Amen.

"We are called to participate in ordinary miracles"