



SERMON STARTER

Matthew 14:13-21 (NRSV)

# Imagine: Feeding The Multitudes

*“And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full.” Matthew 14:20*

*Now when Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been beheaded “he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself.” (Matthew 14:13 NRSV)*

When the world around us is filled with disagreement and suffering, we are assured that **God has a vision of a new heaven and a new earth** that is already being manifested on earth as it is in heaven.

Yet people still found out where Jesus was and they followed him. Somehow through word of mouth, person after person dropped what they were doing and set out to this “*deserted place*” to experience the **healing power and love** of Jesus.

Can you imagine being one of those people? Perhaps you would bring a loved one who is ill or maybe you would just bring your aching heart. **Your soul is hungering and you have heard about this man named Jesus** and so you set out for this *deserted place*. And soon you realize that thousands of people are headed in the same direction. You are all connected in the yearning for healing and wholeness through Jesus.

**Can you imagine it?**  
*What would you hope to experience in this encounter with Jesus?*

Even in his grief, Jesus treats the people’s needs as holy.

He treats your needs as holy.

He has compassion and he cures the sick.



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
**Connection**



Perhaps he teaches and shares the good news that God loves you and there is nothing you can do about it.

He shares his time in this deserted place.

**All day long.**

And as evening comes you begin to feel hungry. In your excitement, you didn't pack a sandwich. "Honey," You might whisper to your spouse, "do you have any snacks?" You don't want to leave this once in a lifetime moment with Jesus but the kids are getting a little antsy and grumpy.

The disciples recognize this. I'm sure you can imagine they are trying to be helpful.

"Rabbi, you need to wrap this up. It's late and people are hungry. You need to send them away so they can get food."

**The disciples only saw why they could not feed everyone.**

They only saw that they did not have enough. They saw only five loaves and two fish and a large crowd, and said *"we can't do anything for all these people send them away."*

I wonder where you experience this kind of limitation in your own life. **Where the daily stress, financial issues, anxiety, broken relationships . . . limit you from reaching your full potential?** Where do we miss that mark as disciples?

I wonder where we experience this kind of limitation in the church? Instead of only looking at what we don't have or what we have had in the past, **what are the God sized dreams for "CHURCH NAME"?**

Who do you imagine we can be in 5, 10, 20 years?

Or even in this next year?

Instead of developing the budget with only minimal expenses, what would our dream budget look like? If we could do everything we feel God calling us to do, what would it take? And **can you imagine people traveling from near and far to meet Jesus here?**





Jesus doesn't see the limitations.  
He sees the possibilities.  
He has prophetic imagination.  
YOU feed them, he tells the disciples.

He's sees the connection in the people gathered. And he sees that there is more in the crowd than meets the eye.

He offers gratitude for what they DO have. And he offers a blessing that feeds all of the people.

People who rarely had a full meal experienced satisfaction.

They were filled.

There was more than enough for everyone.

**There IS more than enough for everyone.  
Can you imagine every need being met?**

Not the frivolous wants of your life . . . but your deepest desires, the meaningful dreams that you envision when you allow your imagination to lead you.

**What does that look like?**

**Is it really more than God through Jesus can manage?**

Jesus who blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples to distribute to all who were hungry?

YOU feed them, he said.

Jesus who later . . . on the night he was arrested . . . blessed and broke the loaf and gave it to his disciples saying take and eat.

Jesus who was betrayed, denied, rejected, mocked, beaten, and brutally and executed . . . but **through the imaginative love of God was powerful enough to overcome even death . . .**

*Nothing is impossible with God* we remember the angel told Mary announcing the coming of Jesus.

