

Hangry Worshipers

A devotional by Greg Mathurin

Matthew 14: 13-21

13 When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. **14** When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

15 As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

16 Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

17 "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

18 "Bring them here to me," he said. **19** And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. **20** They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

21 The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

The vision for Arcola United Methodist Church is that all of God's people grow in wisdom and in wholeness, where wholeness is defined as thriving mentally, physically, and spiritually. This passage represents to me how Jesus cared not just about our spiritual health, but acts as an acknowledgement that we can be better Christians when our basic human needs are met. God made us in his image, and that image gets hungry sometimes. The 5000 became hungry, and some might see it as an act of sacrifice or self-denial not to let that get in the way of worship. Jesus instead wants us to also be human, but to look to God for our "daily bread". In doing so, Jesus makes the passing around of the bread and fish an act of community and mutual uplifting, enabling the crowd to place attention on one another and not solely on Him.

The second message I read from this is how Jesus can perform "small miracles". This passage states that Jesus healed the sick in this crowd, but that did not even become the focal point. Though we cannot do acts of God, we ourselves can do small miracles for others. Not all acts pleasing to God are life-changing, ostentatious, or even necessarily planned ahead of time. We should find small ways we can make a difference in others' lives and allow the light of the holy spirit to shine through us each and every day. If Jesus wasn't too busy or important to worry about such things, then neither should we be.